

# Christian Orient

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SPIRITUALITY

EDITORIAL

JESUS CHRIST, THE IMAGE OF THE FATHER

Sebastian Athappilly cmi

"ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE CHRISTIAN MEDITATION"

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil cmi

REPENTANCE AND PENITENCE IN MAR APREM OF NISIBIS

Rev. Dr. Mathew Paikatt

BOOK REVIEW, NEWS

# CHRISTIAN ORIENT

An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative  
Theological Thinking

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## SPIRITUALITY

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## Editorial

### “Indian Christian Spirituality” ?!

It was interesting to go through the statement of the Indian Theological Association’s annual meeting, December 28–31, 1990 (given in *Journal of Dharma* 16/2 (1991) 172–183). This time they have come out with a strange utopian concept of “Indian Christian Spirituality.” Upto now the talk was always on “Indian Spirituality”—an attempt at hinduization of Christian spirituality (cfr also our discussion on this topic in *Christian Orient* 5/3 (1984) 99–104). But now, it appears, that they have made another step and there, what they are aiming at is a *secular spirituality*, to be more precise, the *secularization of Christian spirituality*. The spirituality issue of *Christian Orient* can in no way connive at such situations.

We do not know how many Christians will subscribe to this new process of secularization! The vast majority of Christians in India who live their faith consciously and responsibly will find it very difficult to do that.

A speciality of the said “statement” is that it has assumed the tone of dogmatic assertions, which even the second Vatican Council thought to change. We do not understand how those theologians who are very liberal with regard to so many essential issues in the Church, have turned out so dogmatic in this proposal! This association in India may be better expressed through one of its own assertions in the “statement”:

“In their reckless attempt to grab their resources, the intruding groups have not only come to exploit them in various ways but are also threatening their traditional identity, fabric of their social structure, way of life and values, even to depriving them of some of their fundamental rights” (no. 2).

The Indian Theological Association is almost like an intruding group, trying to grab the resources of the Churches in India, exploiting Christianity, threatening the traditional identity of different Churches, their ways of life and values, and even trying to deprive them of their fundamental rights.

Under the pretext of implementing the teachings of Vatican II, or under the labels of inculturation or acculturation or contextualization or indegenization or indianization, these theologians in India have gone too far from what is desired and laid down by the second Vatican Council or the teaching authority of the Church. The present “statement” itself will clearly prove it.

Vatican II has definitely opened new avenues of Christian approach to other religions, local traditions and world cultures. But that must not be misinterpreted in such a way as to prefer culture and nationality to faith itself or to equate other religions with Christianity. Similarly, speaking about one's own identity in faith must not be labelled as triumphalism and expression of superiority.

It is true that there is recently a national awakening in India and its impact is also on Christian thinking. National and cultural consciousness is essential to anybody's social and religious life, but that must not be, for a Christian, at the expense of the proper ecclesial awareness. The Church can never be understood or explained as a merely national or cultural entity. It is, in fact, a reality opened to both the local and the world situations (national as well as cultural). No ecclesial heritage, though it be born and built up in the context of a particular nation and culture, can remain foreign to a different nation and culture. Even the different cultures transcend the particular limitations of the countries or the context of their origin when they reach a more developed and refined stage.

When one considers the Christian heritage in India, its historical context can in no way be ignored. Among the several Christian traditions or Churches there, the Syro-Malabar or Chaldeo-Indian is the only one that was formed and developed in the Indian context. The others were all already formed and developed elsewhere and entered the scene. Hence a uniform attempt and proposal for integrating Christianity to the Indian context itself is non-contextualized. It is a real aggression on the identity and fundamental rights of all ecclesial heritages. Hence the members of the Indian Theological Association are fraternally requested to make an unbiased objective search into the history and tradition of various Churches or Christian heritages in India and then think of integrating each one's heritage to the living context.

All must be proud of their own national and cultural heritages; it is not the prerogative of a few; but in that enthusiasm, a Christian can never forget his ecclesial identity. Moreover, when the national and cultural realities are overemphasized, it becomes awkward and embarrassing as it happened also in Europe during the Renaissance period when people were introduced to Greek classics. E. R. CHAMBERLIN writes on that as follows:

"Scholarly snobs laced their letters and conversations and even their prayers with classical allusions; God again became Jupitar, Christ was transformed into Appolo, Saints into gods, nuns into vestal virgins. Even the magistrates of the city became conscript fathers (*patres conscripti*), and the theoretically Christian carnivals that heralded lent became the 'lupercalia'" (E. R. CHAMBERLIN, *The Bad Popes*, New York 1969, p. 164).

Almost the same fantastic fascination to the writings and practices of Hinduism is seen in many of the Indian theologians today.

According to the trend exhibited in the said "statement" and the theology of religious pluralism those theologians try to propagate, the Church has no right to preach and baptize. Such actions are all branded as triumphalism and superiority imposition.

Hinduism proposes an individualistic type of worship which, Christianity can in no way encourage. Quite natural that many of such Indian theologians fail to appreciate and experience the authentic worship of the Church. Hence they make all kinds of gymnastics with the Liturgy.

Thank God that at least now the responsible people in the magisterium have begun to sense the danger of such theologizing in the Indian context (cfr *The Letter to the Bishops of Catholic Church on some Aspects of Christian Meditation*, from the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, given on October 15, 1989 and the Speech of Cardinal Jozef Tomko in the Fourth Extraordinary Consistory, *Preaching Christ the World's only Saviour*, appeared in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English), April 15, 1991, p. 4). But none of these documents, we believe, will be considered positively by those Indian theologians. Their sharp criticism on the document on *Christian Meditation* (cfr. *Journal of Dharma* 16/2 (1991) 184-189) displays the way how they approach such documents. We think that it is too late to be content with giving some directions, which might have been effective years ago. Of course, some directives were given in this regard also in the past. But they were all negatively interpreted and contrary practices continued. Those who tried to be faithful to those ecclesial directives were even caricatured.

Now, it has reached a stage where remote expressions or even corrections produce contrary effects. "...the problem is already so extensive and the theories expounded are spreading so rapidly", remarks Cardinal Jozef Tomko in the Fourth Extraordinary Consistory, "that the Holy See can no longer remain passive. They are creating a serious danger for faith in Jesus Christ as proposed by the Church..., on the practical level they are weakening the missionary spirit, reducing evangelization to mere dialogue and development...". Hence it is time for the magisterium to intervene directly and take radical steps. It has to appoint a fully competent machinery and make a thorough study of the priestly and religious formation given in India and on what is going on in the ecclesiastical faculties, seminaries, formation houses, study centres, training iustitutes, prayer centres, ashrams and so on. The emphasis given to Scripture and tradition, the source of Christian faith, in those centres and the importance given to patristics and magisterial teachings are to be specially analysed. At least in some such institutions it has become difficult to speak about the authentic teachings of the Church and very difficult or practically impossible to celebrate with the approved liturgical rites of the Church. If this situation is not corrected immediately, the future of the Churches in India is going to be gloomy.

"According to some Indian theologians", exclaims Cardinal Jozef Tomko in the above mentioned speech, in the search for dialogue Jesus Christ does not unite, but rather, divides; unity and agreement, then, are not to be sought in 'Christocentrism', but in 'theocentrism,' i. e., in the divine mystery, while the person of Jesus Christ is to be relativized".

"Certainly, these theologians know well the biblical texts which present Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of humanity and as the only Mediator between God and men. They consider these texts to be later Christologies and as emphatic affirmations on the level of those made by a husband out of love for his wife".

"Taking the distinction between the Christ-Logos and the historical Jesus as the point of departure, it is claimed that there is more in the Logos than in the historical Jesus, so that the Logos can appear in other religions and be hidden in other historical figures. The Christ-Logos would belong to all religions and be manifested in them. On the other hand, the historical Jesus belongs to the Christian religion and the Church. The salvific mediation of non-Christian religions is also tied to the cosmic Christ-Logos. The role of the Church, though, would be tied to the role of the historical Jesus. Certain titles such as "final, ultimate, unique, universal" are true, then, only if they are applied to *the Word*, but not to the historical Jesus! In conclusion, the universal mystery of salvation is accomplished *by means of all religions*".

"Other theologians affirm that one cannot absolutize the model of Chalcedon or oblige Asia to make a simple translation of it. The Christological titles were given to Jesus later by particular beliefs and cultures and they are already interpretations."

"Others propose a pluralistic theocentrism. Consciously or unconsciously, they not only consider the adherents of the various religions to be equal, but their contents and even their founders, who are all declared to be saviours in whom the infinite Mystery of God is at work or is historically incarnated".

"To make the dialogue equal, either Jesus Christ is downgraded by silence about his divinity, or the founders of other religions are upgraded by making them almost an Incarnation of God, or mediators and saviours equal to Jesus Christ".

At the dawn of such a new situation, we are called on to stress the necessity of reconfirming the uniqueness of historical Jesus in human salvation. Hence we resume our discussion of *this theme* which we had initiated in the last September issue of *Christian Orient*. Rev. Dr. Sebastian Athappilly cmi whose ideas were warmly received by the readers in that issue, himself comes forward with something more beautiful on the same theme in the present article, *Jesus Christ, the Image of the Father: Reflections on His Uniqueness*. Let us offer our most sincere thanks to Fr. Sebastian.

An inordinate fascination for non-Christian methods of prayer and meditation is also shown by several Christians in India, especially the priests and religious. They spend weeks and months for practising such methods, even setting aside the essential liturgical celebrations of the Church, including Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. What about the conscience and sense of duty of the ecclesiastical and religious superiors who give permission to do that? It is in this context that we understand the relevance of the letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith on *Some Aspects of Christian Meditation*.

"With the present diffusion of eastern methods of meditation" warns the said letter, "in the Christian world and in ecclesial communities, we find ourselves faced with a pointed renewal of an attempt, which is not free from dangers and errors, *to fuse Christian meditation with that which is non-Christian*. Proposals in this direction are numerous and radical to a greater or lesser extent. Some use eastern methods solely as a psycho-physical preparation for

a truly Christian contemplation; others go further and, using different techniques, try to generate spiritual experiences similar to those described in the writings of certain Catholic mystics. Still others do not hesitate to place that absolute without image or concepts, which is proper to Buddhist theory, on the same level as the majesty of God revealed in Christ, which towers above finite reality. To this end, they make use of a "negative theology" which transcends every affirmation seeking to express what God is and denies that the things of this world can offer traces of the infinity of God. Thus they propose abandoning not only meditation on the salvific works accomplished in history by the God of the Old any New Covenant, but also the very idea of the One and Triune God, who is Love, in favour of an immersion "in the indeterminate abyss of the divinity": These, and similar proposals to harmonize Christian meditation with eastern techniques, need to have their contents and methods ever subjected to a thoroughgoing examination so as to avoid the danger of falling into syncretism".

We think that the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith has taken the right step in giving this and similar directives in the document. But the Indian theological association in its annual meeting, mentioned above, have made sharp criticisms on such directives. It is in this context that we thought of making an analysis of the Indian theologians' criticisms. Rev. Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil cmi, who is an expert in Hindu as well as Buddhist systems, does this excellent analysis in his article, "*On Some Aspects of the Christian Meditation*". We thank him in a special way.

We would like to repeat the expression of the *Report on the State of Liturgical Reform in the Syro-Malabar Church*, prepared by the Congregation for Oriental Churches, Rome and sent to the Syro-Malabar Bishops on August 12, 1980: "there are insuperable and radical differences between the ethico-religious perspective of Hinduism - of any Hinduism - and that of Christianity. It does nobody any good - and is contrary to the truth - to pass under silence or pretend to ignore such differences, cutting out for oneself a Hinduism according to one's wishes, made out to suit Christianity, or accumulating false "parallels" which cannot convince anyone, and which manifest only superficiality and cultural "approximation": thereby being unjust to Hinduism no less than to Christianity itself and laying oneself open, not unfoundedly, to the accusation or the suspicion, on the part of sensitive Hindus, of "spiritual imperialism" and of insincere manoeuvres".

"The assumption of realities that characterize Indian culture implies necessarily serious study and understanding of Hinduism, especially through a mature contact with its manifold sources, Hinduism being, as rightly insisted upon in many quarters, a fundamental component of this culture".

"The task is not so much of taking up "new" things from the Hindu heritage, as of following oneself to be goaded by the confrontation into deepening in a very special way... values that in Christianity are already given and are already present. This "rediscovery" in the Bible and in the tradition of realities already present, but which are to be emphasized with particular vigour and more distinctly, developed and manifested, is a task which the

Churches in India cannot renounce; it is a precious and glorious service that these Churches are called to offer to the universal Church".

If the so-called Indian theologians were to think and act according to such magisterial guidelines, the Christian witnessing in India would have been far different! Let us hope for a different but brighter future.

Finally, may I also express my most sincere thanks to one and all who have collaborated with me in one way or other for bringing out this issue of *Christian Orient* to the readers. May the Lord bless us all.

Dharmaram College, Bangalore

September 8, 1991

The Nativity of *Iso Māthâ*

Varghese Pathikulangara cmi

Editor

# Jesus Christ, the Image of the Father

## Reflections On His Uniqueness

### 1. Introduction

#### a) *The Question of Uniqueness*

In this era of inter-religious dialogue is it still congruent to speak of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ? The question of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ is not simply one of mere uniqueness, but of a uniqueness having *Universal* validity for revelation and salvation. In his encyclical on evangelization Pope John Paul II devotes the very first chapter to "Jesus Christ, the unique Saviour."<sup>1</sup> In his speech on the theme of evangelization in Asia, Cardinal Tomko, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, emphasized the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as "wholly singular" and deeply important for human salvation.<sup>2</sup> Hence the urgency and priority for the proclamation of Jesus Christ. Hans Küng insists that for all our unreserved open-mindedness towards other religions we should not forget that "Christianity can ultimately be, and become relevant only by activating...in theory and practice the *memory of Jesus as ultimately archetypal*: of Jesus the Christ

and not merely as one of the 'archetypal men'.<sup>3</sup>

The uniqueness of Jesus Christ implies two things, namely, that Jesus is God's self-communication attaining its historical, irreversible climax and that Jesus as man is the Christ and the self-revelation of God. The early church proclaimed it in the faith formulae: Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God; Jesus is the Lord; Jesus is the Son of God. There was thus no dichotomy between Jesus of history and Christ of faith. As H. Küng observes, "for the New Testament the true Jesus is the Christ of God and the true Christ is the man Jesus of Nazareth."<sup>4</sup> In the words of K. Rahner, Christianity proclaims "that this Jesus, who died under Pontius Pilate, is none other than the Christ, the Son of God, the absolute Saviour."<sup>5</sup> The salvation of all times is grounded in this historical and unique christ-event.

It is not a general belief in Christ, but the belief that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ of God, that

1. *Redemptoris Missio* Dec. 7, 1990.

2. Cf. *L'osservatore Romano*, Aug, 1990.

3. H. Küng, *On Being a Christian* New York 1976, p.124.

4. *Idem*, p. 449.

5. K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, London 1978 (hereafter, *Foundations*), p. 232.

distinguishes Christianity from other religions. Having found the one Redeemer in him the God-become man, Christian faith cannot consistently admit the actuality, nor even possibility of another such Incarnation of God and saviour. It is true that one can philosophically put the Christian faith into question, but not its consistency in professing Jesus' uniqueness as something unique. One may doubt whether Jesus is truly God incarnate. But having accepted it, one cannot deny his uniqueness without involving logical and theological inconsequence.

*b) Historicality of Jesus Christ*

Corresponding to the very ontological structure of man Christianity believes in the *historical* intervention of God in diverse ways and finally in the person of Jesus Christ. Man is not merely *also* a historical being, rather his "personal self-interpretation takes place precisely in and through his being in the world, in time and in history."<sup>6</sup> Incarnation of God being not a mere play (*lila*) of God, but the expression of His condescending love for man, takes into account the nature of man who is the addressee and recipient of God's act, respecting not merely his transcendental dimension but also his bodily, historical dimension. As H. Küng writes, "the Christ of Christianity ... is not simply a timeless idea, an eternally valid principle, a profoundly significant myth."<sup>7</sup> Against all docetic tendencies that reduced

Jesus' humanity into a mere appearance the early Church had insisted upon his true bodiliness and historicity (cf. 1. Jn 4,2). The Apostles proclaimed him whom they have seen, heard and touched (I Jn 1,1-3; cf Lk 1, 1f). The very mention of the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate, a secular instance, in the sacred creed of the Christians points again to this importance of historicity in Christian faith. In this context the following remark of H. Küng is relevant: Only naive Christians can rejoice over a Christ figure among the gods in a Hindu temple. The gracious acceptance of... Christ into a pantheon was opposed by the early Christians with all their powers...the Christ of the Christians is no other than *Jesus of Nazareth*. And in this sense Christianity is essentially based on history, Christian faith is essentially historical faith."<sup>8</sup> In Christianity not merely the Christ value, but also the Christ-fact is essential.

Revelation that is confined to the inner depths of human conscience and consciousness, a salvation theory that ignores human historicality and stresses only human interiority and transcendence may appear to be a lofty "spirituality"; but it betrays a poor and unrealistic anthropology. Such a theory is not salvific; for one does not find there wholeness. Christian scheme of revelation and salvation is both Christocentric and theocentric<sup>9</sup>, incarnational and transcendental. It is either a caricature or a

6. *Idem*, p. 40.

7. H. Küng, *op. cit*, p. 145.

8. *Idem*, p. 146.

9. Cf. G. Moran, *Theology of Revelation* New York 1966, p. 63. On the theme of Christo-centrism and Theocentrism cf. S. Athappilly, "Is Christian Revelation Theocentric or Christocentric?" in: P. Puthenangady (ed.), *Emerging India and the Word of God*, Bangalore 1991, pp. 126-138; D. Veliath, "Is Christian Revelation Christocentric or Theocentric?," *Idem*, pp. 139-149, J. Dupuis, "Christian Revelation and Christian Theology. Theocentrism and Christocentrism," *Idem*, pp. 183-202.

misconception of Christianity to view its Christocentrism as ridiculous stand comparable to concentrating at the finger-tip that points to the moon. According to Christian faith Jesus Christ is not comparable to the finger that remains external to the pointed; rather he is himself the self-expression of God and the Kingdom in person (*autobasileia*). The mysteries of his life are authentic object of Christian meditation. A contentless meditation or a meditation into the "void" is not compatible with the very incarnational basis of Christian faith.

It is Jesus' characteristic being really God and man, consubstantial with the Father as to the divinity and consubstantial with us as to the humanity (ND 614). This is what distinguishes him from all the others and makes him not merely unique, but "uniquely unique" or "absolutely unique".<sup>10</sup> He has not merely brought us the words of God and revealed us His will; he is the Word of God (Jn 1, 14): "*God's word and will in human form*".<sup>11</sup> The NT expression, "the image (*eikon*) of God" for Jesus Christ articulates this original Christian faith.

## 2. The Scripture

### a) Jesus' Being as the Image of God

The New Testament applies the term "image of God" primarily and in its full sense to Jesus Christ. He is the image of God in the most eminent way which no one else is and can be. St Paul characterizes him so explicitly in 2 Cor 4,4. The same understanding was found in Hellenistic

Christianity as is suggested by Col. 1,15: Christ as "the image of the invisible God" and Hb 1,3: the Son as the "brightness of his God's glory" and "impression" (*charakter*) of his hypostasis". The Johannine Christology of the Logos as the "exegete of the Father" (Jn 1,18) and the statement of the Johannine Christ to Philip, "He who has seen me, has seen the Father" (Jn 14,9) factually mean the same as the Pauline expression "image of God" for Christ.

In characterizing Jesus Christ as the image of God Paul thinks of the exalted Lord.<sup>12</sup> This is shown by the words that immediately follows the designation of Christ as image of God. Paul says: "For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor 4,5). He continues them to speak of the "light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (v.6) His proclamation of Christ as "the Lord" corresponds thus to His characterization of him as the image of God. With this confession of Jesus' Lordship the Christian faith puts Jesus on the side of God. The confession in 1 Cor 8,5f refers to the same idea. It is said there that "for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." The thought of Christ's role as creator suggests here his divinity as the Lord.

Further it may be noted that the title Lord (*Kyrios*) was originally used

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- 10. J. Dupuis, "The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ in the Early Christian Tradition," in: *Jeevadhara* 8 (1978), (pp. 393-408) p. 395. Cf. J. Kuttianimattathil, *Jesus Christ. Unique and Universal*, p. 95.
- 11. H. Küng, *op. cit.*, p. 443.
- 12. J. Eckert, "Christus als 'Bild Gottes' und die Gottebenbildlichkeit des Menschen," in: H. Frankenmolle-K. Kertelege (ed.), *Vom Urchristentum Zu Jesus*, Freiburg i:Br. 1989 (J. Gnilke Festschrift), (pp. 337-357), pp. 345ff.

for yahweh. The transfer of this title to Jesus implies the early Church's faith in his divinity. As M. Hengel<sup>13</sup> observes, Paul gives the text of Joel 2,32 as the basis for the key acclamation "Lord Jesus" (Rom 10, 13. cf. Acts 2,21). In the original text "Lord" refers to God Himself. For Paul is Jesus the Lord in whom God makes a full disclosure of salvation. This recognition is possible only through faith. It is only by the Holy Spirit that one is able to confess "Jesus is Lord" (1 Cor 12, 3). But whoever confesses so, will be saved (Rom 10,9).

The characterization "image of God" can be considered to be inspired by the Jewish wisdom theology. This religious-historical background becomes evident when we observe what is said of wisdom in Wis. 7,25f.: "She is a breath of the power of God, and a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty..... She is a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God, and an image of his goodness". As wisdom reveals God's goodness, so is Christ the representation of God's glory. The background of the wisdom theology in the expression "image of God" for Christ can be recognized also from hymn of the Letter to the Colossians (cf. Col 1,15f). Wisdom is not merely the image of God's goodness, but also is at work with God at creation (Cf. Prov. 8,22-31). Christ is for the Christian faith the wisdom of God in person. The thought of his pre-existence and creative role is intimately connected with it. J. Gnilke says therefore that as the image of God, Christ is God's presence in the world". As image of

God he "stands on the side of God"<sup>14</sup>. Consequently, "who speaks of Christ, speaks of God".

The expression "image of God" creates also association between Christ and Adam<sup>15</sup>. Whereas Philo identified the Logos with the first Adam as the heavenly Man, for Paul it is Jesus Christ the last (eschatological) Adam who is identical with the heavenly, pre-temporal image of God. In other words, Jesus is of a *divine* nature; he is the one who is "from heaven", the man of heaven", the "life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15, 45-47). In this sense Paul's expression "image of God" for Christ emphasizes the latter's divinity, his equality with God. The phrase is thus comparable to the description of Christ in Phil 2, 6: "though he was in the form of God, (he) did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped" (as a booty). Commenting on the expression "image of the invisible God" (Col 1, 15), J. Eadie argues as follows<sup>16</sup>. Since God is infinite, no creature can bear upon it the full impress of divinity. For the sake of created vision there is the need of a medium of representation. But this medium has to be in total harmony with the original, must be God's exact similitude. And in order to be Divine as well visible, the image of God must be *homoousios*, of the same essence with God. Jesus Christ is the perfect likeness of God in his human nature's visibility, for he is Immanuel, God-with-us. "In His incarnate state He brought God so near us as to place Him under the cognizance of our very senses".<sup>17</sup>

13. M. Hengel, *The Son of God*, Philadelphia 1976, p. 75.

14. Cf. J. Eckert, *art. cit.*, p. 347.

15. M. Hengel, *op. cit.*, p. 75

16. J. Eadie, *Greek Testament Commentaries Colossians*, Michigan 1979, p. 43.

17. *Idem*, p. 44.

*b) Jesus' Revelatory and Salvific Role as the Image of God*

Another implication of Christ being the image of God is his significance for revelation of God and His salvation for man. The uniqueness of Christ is not merely in his *being* (ontological Christology) but also in his functioning as revealer and saviour (functional Christology). This is explicitly stated by Paul. According to him it is "only through Christ" that the veil concealing God's glory is lifted (2 Cor 3, 14). God has given us "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face (*prosopon*) of Christ" (2 Cor 4, 6). This corresponds to what is said about the revelation of the mystery of God's will and plan in Jesus Christ (Eph 1, 9f). In him we have the new dispensation of the spirit" and of righteousness (2 Cor 3, 8f) as opposed to the old "dispensation of death carved in letters on stone" (2 Cor 3, 7), "the dispensation of condemnation" (3, 9). The splendour of Moses' face is here contrasted with the glory of God manifested in Christ's face (2 Cor 3,7; 4,6).<sup>18</sup> This contrast resembles what we find in the Logos-Christology of the prologue of St. John's gospel. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father..... And from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus christ" (Jn 1,14. 16-17). Seeing

the glory (*doxa*) of God in Jesus Christ means in both the texts the bestowing of God's revelatory and salvific *grace*. And this is the gospel, the good news for us. This Gospel is not merely a statement, but a person. As G. Moran rightly puts it, "Jesus Christ is the gospel that spring up from within the inner life of the triune God".<sup>19</sup> The apostles hence preached Jesus Christ (2 Cor 1,19. 4,5; 1 Cor 2,2) and not merely his message or teaching. Hence the importance of Jesus person in Christian faith, so much so that we can say that "Christianity is Christ".<sup>20</sup> As B. Van Iersel points out, Paul's expression "image of God" for Jesus makes also clear in which aspect he surpasses all the prophets.<sup>21</sup> Besides the *auditive* element of the message that is common to the prophets and Jesus, we have in him the *visual* element, so that "the invisible God becomes recognisable in what Jesus does and in what happens to him. As the image..... the son shows who and how God is and what he is prepared to do for us in his love. As often happens, the son's face shows the Father's features".<sup>22</sup>

The manifestation of the glory of God in Jesus' face refers to Jesus as the *visible* image of God. God who is invisible He *manifests* Himself to men by a striking action and this is His glory (*kabod*).<sup>23</sup> To see "the glory of the Lord" meant thus to see God's salvific act of the miracle of the manna for the people of Israel (Ex 16,7). So too they saw the *glory* of the Lord in

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18. V. P. Furnish, *II Corinthians* (The Anchor Bible), New York 1976, p. 251.

19. G. Moran, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

20. J. B. Chethimattam, *Dialogue in Indian Tradition*, Bangalore 1969, p. 130.

21. B. Van Iersel, "Son of God" in the New Testament," in: *Concilium* 153 (3/1982), (pp 37-48), p. 45.

22. *Ibid.*

23. Cf. R. E. Brown, "Doxa," in his *Commentary on the Gospel according to John I-XII* (Anchor Bible Vol. 29), app. 4, p. 499. Cf. also L. Bermejo, *Body broken and Blood Shed*, Gujarat 1986, p. 210.

the cloud which signified and made visible His salvific presence with them in their desert wandering (Ex 16, 16, 10. cf. 24,17). This salvific glory of God corresponds to his very name and being as salvific presence (Cf. Ex 3,14) and love (1 Jn 4,16). As the incarnate Word Jesus is the embodiment of divine glory. In Jesus Christ God pitched his tent among us in the flesh of Jesus Christ (Jn 1,14) and that is the climax of God's salvific presence and glory, so that man may have life; life in abundance (Jn 10,10). Hence Irenaeus says that the glory of God is man being fully alive<sup>24</sup>.

Just as God's glory is salvific so too is his truth. As the unveiling (*aletheia*) has taken place in Jesus Christ (2 Cor 3,14) he is the truth of God in person (Jn 14,6). Here it is not a question of a mere philosophical, *impersonal*, truth (what is truth? Jn 18, 38), but of a salvific, *personal* truth (I am the truth. Jn 14,6). In this way we can understand the Pauline phrase in 2 Cor 4,6: "the face of Christ" as the culmination of the verse and the "theological heart" of the letter<sup>25</sup>. The face of Christ is a symbol for the gospel and so it is "a face that is heard". It represents the subject of the events of crucifixion and resurrection. It leads us therefore beyond a functional understanding of the gospel events. Consequently, "we cannot be content with speaking of God doing something through these events. We have to speak also of the person of Jesus Christ"<sup>26</sup>. The face of Christ is

"intrinsic to who God is" and hence knowledge is given its true focus and criterion in this face. Truth is here conceived as a "particular person's face"<sup>27</sup>; this means that the "gospel is testimony". Faced with a face, one is not encountering a proposition to be proved or disproved. It is here a question of personal acceptance or rejection. The content of the testimony is the person of Jesus Christ. Faith is thus "living before the face of Christ in free thanks, prayer and praise"<sup>28</sup>. And it is wrong to conceive of God "in himself" behind or apart from the face of Christ; for the glory of God is "uniquely present in Jesus Christ" so that we can say that "the glory of God is none other than that in the face of Christ"<sup>29</sup>. It is a glory that is defined through his crucifixion and resurrection. K. Rahner says: We may speak about the *impersonal* Absolute without the non-absolute flesh of the Son, but the *personal* Absolute can be truly found only in him, in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead in the earthly vessel of his humanity"<sup>30</sup>. God is not the abstract God of the philosophers, but the living God who enters into dialogue with men, the personal God of the covenant. And Jesus himself is the covenant of God in person, His fidelity and love as personal truth (revelation), the Servant of the Lord given as a "covenant to the people, a light to the" nations (Is 42, 6). So is his blood the "blood of the new covenant" (Mk 14,24). This Jesus "loved me and gave

24. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haeress* IV, 20, 7.

25. F. Young & D. F. Ford, *Meaning and Truth in 2 Corinthians*, Grand Rapids 1988, p. 249.

26. *Idem*, pp. 249f

27. *Idem*, p. 252.

28. *Idem*, p. 251.

29. *Idem*, pp. 259f.

30. K. Rahner, "The Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus for our Relationship with God," in: *Theological Investigations*, Vol 3, (35-46), p. 43.

himself for me" (Gal 2, 20). He is the good Shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep (Jn 10,15) and the Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world by taking it (the sin) upon himself (Jn 1,29). Where else do we have such a salvation of God in person? Teachings and teachers we do have in plenty, but a teacher who has washed the feet of his disciples, a shepherd who has died for his sheep, a master who has served his servants, we do not have other than in Jesus. And precisely hence he is the image of the invisible God who is love. Whoever has seen Jesus, has therefore seen the Father (Jn 14,9). The speciality of Christian faith is thus not primarily the teachings of Jesus Christ, but rather he himself. Confessing him is significant for salvation (cf. Mk 8,38). The last judgment scene as depicted in Mt 25, 31ff makes it clear again that salvation is not merely dependent on some charitable deeds, but of loving Jesus, who is the point of reference. The Kingdom is the Kingdom of his Father (Cf. also Mt 7,21; 20,23 18,11.14).

As the perfect image of God, Christ fulfills also the *salvific* role. According to Pauline Soteriology "if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5, 17). In the context of the Adam – Christ – typology he characterizes the first man as living being who was from the earth and of dust, but the second man (Christ) is a life-giving spirit, the man of heaven (1 Cor 15, 45ff). Thinking of the future stage of salvation as the new creation in Christ, Paul then expresses the hope that "just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven" (v. 49). We are therefore advised to put on him (Rom 13,14). Paul is happy that Christ lives in him (Gal 2, 20), but is "in travail until Christ is formed" in the disciples

(Gal 4, 19). All this – Christ "forming in", "being conformed to" and "transformed into Christ" and his image refers to his salvific function as the image of God. In this light we understand J. Jervell's observation that the designation "life-giving spirit" (1 Cor 15, 45) is a variant of the expression of Christ as the "image of God"<sup>31</sup>. Our transformation into the likeness of Christ, who is the likeness of God, is thought of by Paul as a process. We are "being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory into another" (2 Cor 3, 18). This transformation begins to take place with the encounter of Christ. Who has recognized him as the image of God and has encountered his glory, cannot remain unaffected. There takes place an existential change. Paul experienced it himself on his way to Damascus (Cf. Gal 1, 15f; 1 Cor 9, 1, 15, 8). 2 Cor 4, 6 can be understood also against this background. There Paul uses the analogy to God's creation act probably to convey the idea of salvation in Christ as new creation (Cf. 2 Cor 5, 17).

The thought of Christ as the redeemer in his status as the image of God has its background in the understanding of man as created in God's image (Gen 1, 27). Man distorted it by his sin. It is Christ who can redeem man, for he is in a unique way the perfect image and likeness of God. And therefore he is "our wisdom, our righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1, 30).

### 3. The Fathers of the Church

#### a) Athanasius: *Jesus Christ, the Consubstantial Image*

The real divinity and humanity of Jesus has been the issue of controversy in the history of Christology. Heresies originated that affirmed

31. Cf. J. Eckert, *art. cit.*, p. 350. For the following cf. *idem.*, p. 353.

either the divinity or the humanity at the cost of the other. Arius, for example, interpreted the expression "Jesus Christ, the image of God" in the sense of an imperfect image and so denied Jesus' essential unity with the Father. He taught that the Son (Logos) did not exist eternally and that it is only after the Son has been "begotten" (i.e., created in time) that God has become Father. The Son is called "image" in the sense that he has received this quality as a gift from the Father in a creaturely way. He can be the image of God only in a restricted sense, for he is, although the first and most perfect creature, *essentially* dissimilar and inferior to God. Against this Arian heresy Athanasius defended the essential equality of the Son with the Father. The Son is, according to him, the image of the Father essentially.

Athanasius pointed out that the attribute "Father" is not something accidental to God, as is the case with human beings<sup>32</sup>. God begets not in the way man begets. In the human realm, one becomes father. But if God is Father, He is that *eternally*. It is rather because of God who is eternally Father that men are called fathers of their children. All the fatherhood (*pasa patria*) in heaven and on earth receives its name from God the Father, as the Apostle says (Eph 3, 15). Since God is Father eternally, the son also is equally eternal and possesses all the divine attributes. He is thus powerful, light, Lord etc. Further, the expression "image of God" is not

merely a metaphorical and external predicate of the Son. The Son is really the perfect image of the Father. That is why Jesus said that he who sees him sees the Father (Jn 14, 9), that he and the Father are one (Jn 10, 30) and that all what the Father has is also his (Jn 16, 15). Between the Father and the Son there is thus a perfect communion of *being*, so that the Son is the perfect fruit and "the express image of the Father".<sup>33</sup> This is not a predicate only of the eternal Logos before the Incarnation, but also of the *incarnate* Logos. Athanasius thus specifies that "our Saviour Jesus Christ is the very image of God".<sup>34</sup> Otherwise there would have been no salvation which consists in divinizing man by restoring God's image in him. Jesus Christ came to renew man which could be done only by the "word of God who alone is the image of God". In him "the Word of God came in his own person, in order that, as he is the image of his Father, he might be able to restore man who is in the image".<sup>35</sup> The following words of Athanasius clarify this point further: "For as when a figure which has been painted on wood is spoilt by dirt, it is necessary for him whose portrait it is to come again so that the picture can be renewed in the same material – for because of his portrait the material ... is not thrown away, but the portrait is redone on it – even so the all-holy Son of the Father, who is the image of the Father, came to our realms to renew man".<sup>36</sup> Athanasius says thus two things: a) The word of

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32. Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, 41 (R. W Thomson ed., *Athanasius. Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, Oxford 1971., p. 113).

33. Athanasius *De Incarnatione*, 13 (R. W. Thomson ed., *op. cit.*, p. 165).

34. *Ibid.*, (R. W. Thomson ed., *op. cit.*, p. 167)

35. *De Incarnatione*, 14 (R. W. Thomson ed., *op. cit.*, p. 167).

36. Gregory Nazianzen, *The Fourth Theological oration* 20 (P. Schaff-H. Wace, ed., *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* 2nd series, Vol. 7, Michigan, p. 317).

God, the Son, alone is the image of God this implies his true divinity, hence he is consubstantial with the Father b) This divine Son came to our realms in order to restore us and that is Jesus Christ. Coming to our realms implies, however, the whole living out and bearing a particular history actually. Inspired by this Athanasian Christology, the Council of Nicea confesses Jesus as "God from God, light from Light, true God from true God ... one in being with the Father" (ND 7).

b) *Gregory Nazianzen: Christ, the Living Image*

Gregory Nazianzen is another important Church Father who strongly upheld the Son's essential equality with the Father in connection with the expression "image of God" as applied to Christ. He writes: "For this is of the Nature of an Image, to be the reproduction of its Archetype, and of that whose name it bears; only that there is more here. For in ordinary language an image is a motionless representation of that which has motion; but in this case it is the living reproduction of the living One. For such is the nature of simple Existences, that it is not correct to say of them that they are Like in one particular and Unlike in another; but they are a complete resemblance, and should rather be called Identical than Like".<sup>37</sup>

Hence the Son is "God in visible form"<sup>38</sup>. The Arian argument based on God's simplicity becomes thus for Gregory precisely the argument

against Arianism; for God's simplicity does not exclude the word from His nature, but includes it precisely because God is simple! In this simplicity the image and the original are fully in unity. The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father. In the Son we have therefore real access to the Father; he is the Father's revelation in person. This is valid also for Jesus Christ, the Son incarnate. He is therefore as the Son the perfect image of the Father. This justifies theologically the sacred image of Christ as the *Pantokrator* (the Almighty).

c) *Basil: Christ the Co-Eternal Image*

Also Basil defended the divinity of the Only Begotten Son and his co-eternity with the Father.<sup>39</sup> As scriptural support for his thesis Basil points at the passages, "He is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1, 15) and "brightness of his glory"<sup>40</sup>. He argues that the "brightness" is to be thought of with the "glory" (Hb 1, 1). and the "image" with the archetype (2 Cor 4, 4), and the Son always and everywhere together with the Father. Hence it is theologically justified to offer doxology to the Father with the Son<sup>41</sup>. The Son is in essence without variation from the Father. So too in power and wisdom of God (1 Cor 1,24). At the name of Jesus every knee should therefore bow (Phil 2,10). The phrase "through him" applied to the Son only indicates the unity of the will of the Father and the Son, and not the Son's ontological inferiority<sup>42</sup>. According to Basil, even the scriptural passage

37. Gregory Nazianzen, *The Fourth Theol. Oration* 21.

38. Basil, *De Spiritu Sancto*, VI, 13,14.

39. *Idem*, 15.

40. *Idem*, 16.

41. *Idem*, VIII, 21.

42. Basil, *Letter VIII*, 5.

"My Father is greater than I" (Jn 14, 28) which is used by the heretics as an argument against Jesus' divinity and essential equality with the Father is rather a confirmation of the Son's equality with the Father as to the divinity; for comparisons are properly made between things which are of the same nature of species. Since the Father is said to be greater than the Son by comparison, the Son is of the same substance as the Father<sup>43</sup>. This consubstantiality with God the Father is retained by the Son also in his incarnate state. Hence Basil calls Jesus "our Christ and God"<sup>44</sup>.

*d) Gregory of Nyssa: Christ, the Form and the Face of the Father*

The emphasis on the essential unity and equality of the Son and the Father contained with it the possibility of the heresy of the denial of the real distinctions among the divine persons, the denial of God's Trinity. Modalism with its various forms did in fact hold such a position and taught that the three divine "persons" are actually only the three different modes or ways of appearance of the one and the only one subsistence. The strict Jewish monotheism was the theological background of this monarchianistic modalism. Too much stress on the distinction of the divine persons could on the other hand lead to the other extreme position, which is equally heretical, namely, tritheism. Remaining within the sound doctrine of the Trinity, which stresses equally the unity and distinction of the divine persons, it had to be shown, how the Son is, precisely in his distinctive property, the perfect image of the Father. How to explain that the person of the

son is the image of the Father precisely in that which distinguishes him from the Father, in his sonship?

The distinction between essence (*ousia*) and person (*hypostasis*) was fundamental in answering the above question. In the pre-Christian philosophies these two concepts were synonyms. The treatise on the difference between the two terms, traditionally known as Basil's 38th Letter, is today considered to be the work of his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>45</sup> According to the Cappadocian explanation, *ousia* denotes general (common) essence or substance, for example, "man". *Hypostasis*, on the other hand, points to an individual entity, for example, Peter. *Hypostasis* or person is that which subsists and gives to a general essence a concrete existence; i. e., it circumscribes the general essence. This is comparable to the artist's circumscribing a man by "writing" his individual characteristics (by drawing and carving) in an image or statue so that the people recognize there in the particular man. The verbal characterization (portrait) of somebody is another analogy. As an example we find the description in the Book of Job, the account going from the general "a man" to the particular man Job (Cf. Job 1,1).

Applied to the Holy Trinity, essence (*ousia*) refers to the common divine nature and person (*hypostasis*) refers to the several distinctive properties. The characteristic of the first divine person is to be the Father, the Unoriginate Origin, owing existence to no one. The special property of the second divine person is to be begotten by the Father and to declare the Holy Spirit, the third divine person whose

43. *Idem*, 4.

44. C. Schonborn, *op. cit.*, p. 29; cf. P. Schaff-H. Wace (ed.), *op. cit.*, Vol. 8, p. 137, foot note 1.

45. Basil, Letter XXXVIII, 6.

special feature it is to proceed from the Father and to be known with the Son. The distinctive properties do not endanger the unity in God, for the properties are precisely that which unite. The characteristic of each person consists in the total relationship to the other two persons. The communion of the divine persons is grounded in that relationship. The emphasis on the person's distinctiveness and uniqueness implies here not a particularistic individualism, but rather communion and community.

Gregory is aware that his explanation of hypostasis seems to clash with the scriptural designation of Christ as "the brightness" of God's glory and "the express image of His hypostasis" (Hb 1, 3.). If hypostasis is the conflux of several properties that make some one proper and peculiar, how then does the Scripture ascribe the term hypostasis to the Father alone? Why is the Son described here as the form (*charakter*) of the Father's hypostasis and not designated by his own proper name.<sup>46</sup> Gregory draws our attention to the fact that the primary intention of the author of the said scriptural passage is not the distinction of the hypostases from one another, rather the apprehension of the "natural, inseparable, and close relationship of the Son to the Father."<sup>47</sup> That is why the glory of the only-begotten is described as the brightness of the glory of the Father. We must not think of one form of glory in the case of the Father and of another in that of the Son. Using the example of the light, the scriptural author wants us to think of the Son in

indissoluble association with the Father. "For just as the brightness is emitted by the flame, and the brightness is not after the flame, but at one and the same moment the flame shines and the light beams brightly, so does the apostle mean the Son to be thought of as deriving existence of the Father."<sup>48</sup> Precisely in the same manner the text speaks of the "express image (*charakter*) of person (*hypostasis*)."<sup>49</sup> To explain this Gregory takes the example of body and its form. The body is wholly in form, although both are different. In theory you can separate the form from the body, but actually the form is inseparable from the body, although distinct from its. Both are inseparably apprehended. Similarly, even if the divine hypostases are distinct and different, there is a continuous and concrete relation existing between the Son and the Father. The union between both is not intervened by something else. Whoever fixes his gaze earnestly on the Son, perceives also the hypostasis of the Father. The scriptural passage in question is thus not a denial of the distinct hypostasis of the Son.

In order to clarify his point Gregory turns further to the interpretation of the scriptural text where the Son is called "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1, 15).<sup>50</sup> The intention of the text is again to show the close unity of the Son with the Father, for image is "the same as the prototype, even though it be different."<sup>51</sup> The idea of the image implies the plain and invariable likeness. He who perceives the beauty of the image

46. Basil, Letter XXXVIII, 7.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Idem*, 8. Here Gregory (Basil) mentions falsely also the OT text of Wis. 7, 26 as the Apostle's words.

49. *Ibid.*

50. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Book VIII, 2. Cf. C. Schonborn, *op. cit.*, pp. 46f.

perceives the archetype. So too one can behold the Father's hypostasis in the form of the Son. He who has the apprehension of the form of the Son, prints the express image of the Father's person. In other words, through the knowledge of the Son one receives in one's heart the express image of the Father's person, for the whole Son is in the Father and has all the Father in himself. The hypostasis of the Son becomes thus the form and face (*prosopon*) of the knowledge of the Father, and the hypostasis of the Father is known in the form of the Son.

How is "*prosopon*" related to *hypostasis*? "*Proson*" stood, in the common use of language, closer to the Latin term "*persona*" than to the Greek philosophical concept of *hypostasis*. Gregory has described as person. *Proson*, just as *persona* could mean two things: "face" or "countenance" in the biblical sense on the one hand; and "mask" or "role" in the secular sense on the other. Gregory uses the term "*proson*" in the sense of personal countenance. He stresses that the *proson* is borne by a *hypostasis* of which it is the expression and not a mask that hides it. This implies also that the human face of Jesus Christ is the expression of the person of the Word. The defenders of the veneration of images (*iconophilia*) could find in Gregory's position a theological support.

Is the Son the image of the Father also in his deeds? One important argument of the Arians against describing the Son as the perfect and living image of the Father was based on the Son's obedience. This obedience revealed according to them the Son's essential (ontological) inferiority and

subordination to the Father; consequently, the Son is only a passive instrument of God and he cannot really reveal God. The ultimate ground for the Son's inferiority was explained to lie in his being generated by the Father. The Son, it was argued, exists either by the Father's will or without it. In the first case, the Son could also not have existed; in the second case, the Father would have been under the necessity of accepting the Son. Making such an aporia between willing and compulsion, the Arians explained the begetting of the Son as a *creation* out of nothing which took place in time. If the Son (*Logos*) is thus a creature from his very origin, he could work only as a creaturely instrument, passive and external to the Father. Gregory challenges and refuses this position by pointing out that the intimate unity between the Father and the Son does not exclude the Father's willing.<sup>51</sup> The Father wills to beget the Son, and this willing is eternal. So the Son is also eternal. There is no moment in which God does not have what he wills for himself. The generation of the Son by the Father constitutes the core of the intimate relationship between both. This relationship makes the Son the perfect image of the Father.

In order to explain the Son's being the image of the Father in his actions Gregory speaks of the reflection of a person in a polished mirror.<sup>52</sup> Just as the reflection moves in accordance with the person's movement, so too Christ follows in everything the movement of the Father's will. The Son is thus the image of the Father not merely in his being but also in his doing. The deed of the Son, which expresses his will, is at the same time

51. Basil, Letter XXXVIII, 8.

52. Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, Book II, 11, For the following cf. *ibid.* Also cf. C. Schonborn, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

the expression of the Father's will. Not in the form of a passive instrument, but rather in such a way that the Son makes himself the expression of the Father's will. It is an active harmony based on the communion in being. The obedience of the Son is thus to be understood in the light of the union of will of the divine persons founded on their essential unity. Against Eunomius, Gregory shows that it is false to hold that the Son is *necessarily* obedient because of his nature as the Son<sup>53</sup>. Apart from the fact that you can speak only of a free obedience (without freedom no obedience), the Son's obedience pertains realm of the only to the salvation-economy of the *Incarnate* Son. And this obedience is to be understood against the background of man's sin that consisted in disobedience. In the act of creation there is no question of an obedience of the Son. Within the life of the triune God there is no commanding or obeying, but only the one common willing. The statement that all things were created *through* the Son (Col 1, 16) is hence to be understood not as his passive instrumentality. The "through him" characterizes rather the special way of the Son's existence to be totally from the Father, so that the Father works and is known *through* him.

e) *Cyril of Alexandria: Christ, the Image of God in the Flesh*

Is the Son also in his *humanity* the image of the Father? Cyril of Alexandria has gone after this question in a special way. As an ardent follower of the Alexandrian "Unity-Christology" he developed the Irenean Christology of the "one and the same" Son

and taught the real identity between the external Logos and the historical Jesus. In the concrete humanity of Jesus, God was seen in the flesh. In the Incarnation the humanity (flesh) assumed by the Word does not remain alien or merely external to him, but has really become his own. The Word has united to himself according to the person (*kat'hypostasin*) the humanity and became man<sup>54</sup>. The Lord Jesus Christ is one, for the Word did not dwell *in* a man, but *became* man, so that "the flesh of the Lord is life-giving" and "is the flesh of the Word of God Himself who is from the Father"<sup>55</sup>. The Word (the Son) who is the image of God, who assumed the form of the servant (Phil 2, 7) retains his likeness with the Father also in this status of incarnation. The era of the incarnation of the Son is hence according to Cyril the era of the Father's face, for the Son is the face (*prosopon*) and image of the Father<sup>56</sup>. And to believe in Jesus Christ is to believe in the person of the Son of God himself. That is why Jesus said to the blind man: "You have seen him, and it is he who speaks to you" (Jn 9,37) and to Philip: "He who has seen me, has seen the Father" (Jn 14,9).

There is, of course, according to Cyril a certain veiling of the glory of the Word in the Incarnation, in the state of *kenosis*. The incomparable beauty of divinity lets the humanity of Christ appear as "extreme ugliness". But this humiliation reveals the grandeur of God's love. Through the lowliness of his form as the servant, the Son makes the Father visible. The crucified is thus the image of the invisible God and of His love. The incarnation and the paschal mystery

53. Cf. Cyril's Second Letter to Nestorius (ND 604 f).

54. *Idem.* (ND 606/11)

55. Cf. C. Schonborn, *op. cit.*, p. 90. For the following cf. *idem*, pp 91–106.

56. K. Rahner, "On the Theology of Incarnation," in: *Theological Investigations* Vol. 4, London 1966 (pp 105–120), p. 113.

are closely connected. The cross and resurrection obtain their meaning from the incarnation, which is the self-renunciation of the Son that reaches its climax on the cross. The cross fulfills the incarnation and reveals what was already there in the incarnation: the love and obedience of the Son. The humanity of Christ is the visible form of the Father's love and the human translation of the eternal sonship. Jesus as Man is thus the incarnate image of God. The humanity of Christ has therefore eternal significance for our salvation.

How can the man Jesus make the divine son visible? To this Cyril answers that the Lord fills his whole body with the life-giving energy of the Spirit. That is why he could characterize his flesh as life-giving principle (Jn 6, 54). Pointing at the healing of the leper (Mt 8, 2f), Cyril shows that Jesus works divinely and bodily: his will is here divine, so that everything happens what he wills; and human (bodily) is his gesture of stretching out the hand and touching the leper. But Christ is one and the same in both. Properties of both the natures-divine and human-work here. The unity of the subject of all the activities, divine or human, is here emphasized by Cyril. In the incarnation Christ's flesh becomes neither a purely passive instrument of God nor is it transformed into God. The special status of Christ's flesh (bodiliness, humanity) is symbolized according to Cyril in the "burning bush" (Ex 3, 2f). Cyril sees the possibility of this mutual penetration of the word and flesh in Christ rooted in man's being

created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1, 26).

#### 4. Contemporary Theologians

##### a) K. Rahner: *Christ the Real-Symbol of God*

Rahner's transcendental Christology and the theology of symbols deepens the vision regarding the intrinsic relationship between the Logos and Jesus' humanity, in such a way that Jesus as man is explained as the real-symbol and image of the Father. Taking, the hypostatic union seriously, K. Rahner stresses that "what happened to Jesus on earth is precisely the history of the word of God himself, and a process which *he* underwent"<sup>57</sup>. This "communication of idioms" is grounded in the *real* incarnation (enfleshing) of the Logos. The condition for the possibility of this lies in the fact that man is factually created as obediential potency for God and hypostatic union<sup>58</sup>. Human nature hence strives "by virtue of its essence", of course on account of God's plan of gracious self-communication, for the fullness of God's mystery<sup>59</sup>. Because of man's finality and dynamism imparted by God himself toward's God's self-communication, "the Incarnation of God is the unique and *highest* instance of the actualization of the essence of human reality"<sup>60</sup>. Being assumed by God as *his* own reality, the human nature thus arrives at its goal, as supreme actualization. Here is involved not merely a Christology from below

57. *Idem*, p. 110. Cf. *Foundations*, pp. 209–216; "Nature and Grace," in *Theol. Invest.*, Vol. 4 (pp 165–188), p. 183.

58. K. Rahner, "On the Theology of Incarnation," p. 109; cf. *Foundations*, p. 208.

59. *Foundations*, p. 218.

60. K. Rahner, "The Theology of the Symbol," in: *Theol. Invest.*, Vol. 4 (pp. 221–252), p. 231.

but also one from above. For the humanity of Christ is the expression, the real symbol of the Logos of God.

Rahner explains symbol as the "derivative and congruous expression, constitute of each being"<sup>61</sup>. Within the inner trinitarian life of God the Logos is generated by the Father as his *image* and *expression*<sup>62</sup>. "It is because God" must express himself inwardly that he can also utter himself outwardly, the finite, created utterance *ad extra* is a continuation of the immanent constitution of 'image and likeness' – a free continuation... and takes place in fact 'through' the Logos"<sup>63</sup>. Along the lines of a Cyrillic Christology, Rahner holds that the humanity of Christ is not a mere instrument or a signal of the Logos, but the *expression* of the Logos, so that Christ, the *incarnate word*, is "not merely the presence and revelation of what God is in himself", but rather "the expressive presence of what – or rather, who – God wished to be, in free grace, to the world, in such a way that this divine attitude... can never be reversed, but is and remains final and unsurpassable"<sup>64</sup>.

In order to bring out the full sense of the symbolic reality of Christ's humanity Rahner explains the Incarnation in terms of *creative assumption* as the result of the Logos' self-emptying (*kenosis*). The humanity of the Logos appears "when God, expressing himself, exteriorizes himself"<sup>65</sup>. Rahner

considers it a misconception to think of the Incarnation as a mere assuming of a human nature which is self-contained prior to the hypostatic union itself<sup>66</sup>. The primary phenomenon in the incarnation is "precisely the self-emptying of God, his becoming, the kenosis and genesis of God himself"<sup>67</sup>. Insofar as God in his abiding fullness empties himself, the other (the humanity of Jesus) comes to be as His very own reality. This phrase is already found according to Rahner in the Augustinian formula that God "assumes by creating" and "creates by assuming"<sup>68</sup>. So is here a "uniting unity" rather than a mere "united unity"<sup>69</sup>. The humanity of Jesus is thus not a reality alien to the Logos and through which he makes himself audible and perceptible. Jesus is the revelation of the Father not merely through his teaching but rather through what he is in his human nature. The self-emptying and the ensuing Incarnation is the way of God's self-manifestation really reaching man entering into the latter's situation. Jesus, the man is hence "the self-utterance of God in its self-emptying"<sup>70</sup> and the human reality of Jesus is the manifestation of God in this world<sup>71</sup>.

In the light of what has been said above Rahner shows that the *real becoming* of God in the Incarnation does not conflict with His immutability; for here God who is immutable

61. *Idem*, p. 236.

62. *Idem*, pp. 236–237.

63. *Idem*, p. 237. (Italics, mine)

64. *Idem*, p. 239.

65. K. Rahner, "Current Problems in Christology," in: *Theol. Invest.*, Vol 1 (pp. 149–200) pp. 156f.

66. *Foundations*, p. 222.

67. *Ibid.*

68. K. Rahner, "Current Problems," p. 182.

69. K. Rahner, "On the Theology of Incarnation," p. 116.

70. K. Rahner, "Current Problems," p. 183.

71. *Foundations*, pp. 220f.

*in himself becomes himself something (i.e., changes himself) in the other, in the humanity of Jesus<sup>72</sup>.* Thus God's immutability is according to Rahner "a dialectical assertion in the same sense as is the assertion of the unity of God in and in spite of the Trinity"<sup>73</sup>.

Since God has thus made himself noticeable among us on this earth, "even to the extent of the tangible flesh of his coessential Son"<sup>74</sup>, the humanity of Jesus has eternal significance for our salvation. His humanity is "the indispensable and permanent gateway through which everything created must pass"<sup>75</sup> if it is to find its perfection; for in Jesus dwells the fullness of the Godhead in the earthly vessel of his humanity. In this way Jesus is the real symbol of God and "the historical arch - Sacrament"<sup>76</sup> of God.

b) *E. Schillebeeckx: Christ, the Sacrament of God*

E. Schillebeeckx treats the theme of "Jesus Christ, the Image of God" in terms of primordial sacramentality. He makes it explicit that "the man Jesus, as the personal visible realization of the divine grace of

redemption, is *the* sacrament, the primordial sacrament, because this man, the Son of God himself, is intended by the Father to be in his humanity the only way to the actuality of redemption"<sup>77</sup>. This is based on the truth that "even in his humanity Christ is the Son of God."<sup>78</sup> He is the image of God not only in his being, but also in his deeds. Jesus' love is the human incarnation of God's redeeming love, "an advent of God's love in visible form"<sup>79</sup>. In this sense we understand Schillebeeckx's characterization of Jesus as the "Parable of God"<sup>80</sup>.

Schillebeeckx considers, further the human existence of Jesus as the revelation of the divine relations within the life of God; their transposition and interpretation into human forms.<sup>81</sup> Jesus' being-as-man is thus "God translated" for us.<sup>82</sup> Jesus' loving obedience reveals Sons's intimacy of life with the Father. The human life of Christ is the expression of adoration of God. His death is the supreme expression of his religious surrender to the Father. Christ realizes thus his divine sonship in his human living and dying. The death to which he freely assented, the supreme moment of his life, is the liturgical act of

72. *Idem*, p. 221.

73. K. Rahner, The Eternal Significance of the 'Humanity of Jesus for our Relationship with God,' in: *Theol. Invest.*, Vol. 3 (pp 35-46). pp. 35f.

74. *Idem*, p. 43.

75. K. Rahner, "What is a Sacrament?" in: *Theol. Invest.*, Vol. 14 (pp 135-148), p. 142. Cf. "The Theology of the Symbol," *Theol. Invest.*, Vol. 4, p. 239: "Jesus, the revelatory symbol of the Father."

76. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, N. Y. 1963, p. 15, cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus. An Experiment in Christology*, London 1979, p. 670.

77. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, p. 13.

78. *Idem*, p. 14.

79. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, p. 626.

80. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament*, p. 29.

81. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus*, p. 670.

82. E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ, the Sacrament*, p. 30.

messianic adoration of God<sup>83</sup>, that has effected our salvation. In the economy of God's salvation, our salvific encounter with God remains hence "bound up with our personal encounter with the man Jesus who is our only way to the Father".<sup>84</sup>

e) *H. Küng: Christ, the Face of God*

According to H. Küng "the *true man* Jesus of Nazareth is for faith the real *revelation* of the one *true God*".<sup>85</sup> In Jesus God shows his face and the face He shows in Jesus is really His "true and single face".<sup>86</sup> Küng speaks here of Jesus' *uniqueness* ("There is a unique relationship of the Father to Jesus"<sup>87</sup>) and *universality* ("since there is no God other than the one revealed in Jesus, Jesus has a universal significance").<sup>88</sup> He says further that there is a uniqueness and unsurpassability of the call, offer and claim made known in and with Jesus, which is ultimately of divine origin and hence absolutely reliable, requiring man's unconditional involvement.<sup>89</sup> This statement together with his words that in and with Jesus God himself was present and definitively revealing himself<sup>90</sup> refers to Jesus' divinity, although Küng has not explicitly spelled it out. For, in order to be the definitive and unsurpassable revelation of God, Jesus has to be in his essence also *divine*. As K. Rahner rightly argues, as long as the mediation of the divine self-expression is

not a divine reality, it is basically provisional and surpassable, because it is finite. It can be surpassed by God through something else finite. "If, therefore, the reality of Jesus, in whom as offer and acceptance God's absolute self-communication to the whole human race 'is present' for us, is really to be the unsurpassable and definitive offer and acceptance, then we have to say..... it is God himself."<sup>91</sup>

## 5 Concluding Remarks

### a) Uniqueness of Jesus as the Image of God

The expression "image of God" for Jesus contains with it a claim to his special uniqueness. While man is created in the image of God Jesus is the image of God by nature. The scriptural designation for him refers to his divinity both in the pre-existent and in the incarnate states on the one hand, and to his revelatory-salvific function on the other. The Fathers of the Church and the early ecumenical Councils were very particular to stress the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. For Athanasius, the whole mystery of salvation is based on Jesus' being really God and the perfect image of the Father. Otherwise there would be, according to him no divinisation of man and no restoration of the

83. *Idem*, p. 40.

84. H. Küng, *op. cit.*, p. 444.

85. *Idem*, p. 446.

86. *Idem*, p. 444.

87. *Idem*, p. 447.

88. *Idem*, p. 449.

89. *Ibid.*

90. K. Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 202.

91. Subhash Anand, "Universally Unique and Uniquely Universal," in: *Vidyajyoti*, 55 (1991) (pp 393-424), pp. 421f.

distorted image of God in man. From the absolute simplicity of God, Gregory of Nazianzen argued for the essential unity of the Son with the Father. Basil insisted on the co-eternity of the Son as the image. Gregory of Nyssa with his distinction of substance and person in the Trinity explained how the Son is the image of the Father. Cyril of Alexandria thought of the incarnation of the Logos in terms of a "union according to the hypostasis" and explained how Jesus also as man is God's perfect image. This incarnational theology is further deepened and explained in a new light today by Rahner's Christology of the symbol, Schillebeeckx's Christology of the "Sacrament of God" and Kung's vision of Jesus as the "Face of God".

The question of Jesus' uniqueness can be dealt with in two ways: by fact (*de facto*) and by right (*de iure*). That Jesus is factual unique both in his being and in his function can be established in a comparative study of other similar religious characters. Here we do not intent to evaluate them *a priori*. We let each religion speak for its own. But we would ask the following questions here: Do we have in the history of religions a similar claim of an instance where God *really* becomes man and remains so? If yes, is the truth of it vindicated and approved by God? Do the Hindus, for instance, believe in truly historical divine *avatara*s? Is *avatara* understood as a real *becoming* of God? If so is it consistent and intelligible to hold that this has taken place repeatedly and in various forms, including the sub-human ones? Has Gautama Buddha spoken of a personal God or of God at all? Is he understood as the Light that enlightens every one or only as the Enlightened? Is it system for Mahayana Buddhism to believe Buddha as God's incarna-

tion? Does Islam profess Mohammed as God-become-man? Is there in any other religion besides in Christianity the faith in the *continuing* presence of the divine incarnation? Is the understanding of salvation the same in all the religions? It is only if some other religion(s) have the self-same understanding and interpretation concerning a particular religious figure as that of Christianity that there would be competition, challenge and conflict regarding the uniqueness of Jesus Christ as the saviour of all. We can think here of two possibilities. Either no other religion makes such a claim as in Christianity, because there is no reason (subjective or objective) for it to hold on or some religions do make it, challenging the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. In the first case we find honesty, and not any special form of tolerance. In the other case, if there is one really, we would respect that conviction but at the same time call for some indications of its divine approval which alone makes the claim actually valid. In the case of Christianity the resurrection of Jesus and other miracles happening in his name are the signs of God's approval concerning his claims as God-Incarnate or Son of God.

Further, the very life-style of Jesus through which he, the image of God revealed the love of God is incomparably different from other comparable cases. According to Subash Anand, it is the revelation of a suffering God who lives out his solidarity with us that makes Jesus unique. "In Jesus God participates in our hunger and thirst, our loneliness and death. With us God undergoes the pain and humiliation of being exploited and oppressed. It is true that in Hinduism we have the idea of God's descent (*avatara*), but there is no place for any suffering in this descent"<sup>92</sup>. S. Anand continues: "This,

92. *Idem*, p. 422.

I believe, is the uniqueness of Jesus: God so loves us as to be with us even in the mess we have created for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters. This is the sacrificial presence of God, this is the meaning of the Cross of Jesus".<sup>93</sup> In his passion, Jesus as the image of God, reveals God's compassion and "God's empassion". This Divine being-with-us (Emmanuel) for our salvation is and has to be *universal*, because God's love as He himself is universal. As "God's loving presence within history."<sup>94</sup> Jesus is the presence of God for all and for all. A salvific love of God cannot be thought of otherwise. A God who comes to seek only the righteous and to punish the wicked, is not salvific. Jesus has come to seek and to save the lost (Lk 19, 10 Cf. Mt 10, 12), to call the sinners to repentance and conversion (Mk 1, 15). He revealed the *universal* love of the Father through his deeds of associating himself also with the sinners (Lk 15, 1f; Mt 9, 10ff), by forgiving sins (Lk 7, 47ff; Mk 2, 5f). Jesus teaches that God is our Father who eagerly awaits the return of the lost son (Lk 15, 11-24), a shepherd who seeks the lost sheep (Lk 15, 3-6), a God who rejoices over the conversion of even one single sinner (cf. Lk 15, 7). God desires *all* men to be saved (1 Tim 2, 4f; cf. 2 Pt 3, 9).

The uniqueness of Jesus as God's image is manifested also in his authoritative teaching and especially in his demands to follow him, to decide for him, to love him more than one loves others, and even to risk one's life for him (Mk 8,35; 10,29f; Mt, 13

16f; Lk 11, 31f; 12,8f). These and other claims of Jesus implying his divinity have been validated and attested by God with mighty works, wonders and signs (Acts 2,22). No one else has made similar claims as Jesus, nor has been attested by God similarly.

Jesus as the image of God is also *de iure* unique, for God cannot show us any other face than the one that he has shown us in Jesus. For what is human in Jesus is "*eo ipso* "God's Eksistence" and so "the mysterious manifestation of God with us".<sup>95</sup> The humanity of Jesus is not an external garment worn by God, but it is his reality. A second becoming and coming is therefore not possible. Jesus offered thus once for all a single sacrifice (Hb 9,26-28; 10, 10-12). If Jesus is God-become-man, then he is that uniquely. No one else can be the same anywhere else, unless we think absurdly of two or more absolute Gods having their immanent words as perfect image and expressibility. If God is one only, then His image or Real-Symbol can be one only. If the historical expression of this symbol is real, then this can take place once only and as one only. The uniqueness of Jesus as the visible, incarnate image of God is not merely factually (contingently) but also on principle (necessarily) unique.

### b) Arrogant and Triumphalistic ?

As A. Pieris observes, "Christology interprets Jesus as the exclusive medium of salvation for all, the *Logos*,

93. *Ibid.*

94. K. Rahner, "Current Problems" p. 183, 191.

95. A. Pieris, "The Buddha and the Christ: Mediators of Liberation," in: J. Hick & P. Knitter (ed.), *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, N. Y. 1987 (Faith meets Faith series), (pp 162-177), p. 173.

the image, ... and so on"<sup>96</sup>. The New Testament bears witness to the faith that Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life and no one comes to the Father but by him (Jn 14,6). St Paul and St Peter explicitly teach us that there is one (only) mediator and one (only) redeemer (1 Tim 2,5, Acts 4,12). According to the Second Vatican Council the mission of the Church is to bring all men to full union with Jesus Christ, so that through him they have access to the Father (LG 1 and 4). Is this confession of Jesus' unique salvific mediatorship a sign of arrogance and triumphalism? As St Paul states, we proclaim thereby "not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (2 Cor 4,5) because God has vindicated him who was "crucified in weakness" (1 Cor 1,22; 2 Cor 13,4; Phil 2,9; Acts 2, 23f). Proclaiming Jesus as Lord is hence proclaiming God's great deed. "The christian claim that the specificity of Christianity has a certain absoluteness with it" does not contain an arrogant sense of absolute-ness.<sup>97</sup> For it says that no higher possibility of God's self-revelation is conceivable than His becoming man in Jesus Christ and that no greater salvific deed is possible than that happened in him. The uniqueness claimed by Christianity is grounded in the acceptance of the finite by God himself<sup>98</sup>. As H. Kung says, the Christian mission and proclamation of Jesus as God's Messiah, Son, Word and Countenance is needed so that

men may recognize God's face and know Him<sup>99</sup>. On the other hand, a rejection of Jesus' unique and universal significance because of his historical, contingent and particular humanity can be expression of pride that is unchristian<sup>100</sup>. A. G Moran points out, it demands a faith that is humble and obedient to acknowledge that "with Jesus Christ, the irreducible, concrete, fleshly word was spoken which expressed all than God wished to say or could say to the world".<sup>101</sup> To those who think worldly this is a folly (cf 1 Cor 2, 23), but the humble and the "babes" recognize in Jesus the saving love of God (Mt 11, 25). Those who preach Christ are fools for his sake (1 Cor 5, 10) and they glory not in *their* power, but in the redeeming cross of Christ (Gal 6, 14) There is, naturally speaking, all the chance to be ashamed of him (Cf. Mk 8,38).

Inter-religious dialogue does not demand the surrender of all specificity claims. For the sake of dialogue one should not forsake one's identity. As Subhash Anand thinks it is "too naive to suggest that surrendering such claims will free us from arrogance. On the contrary, it can lead to new forms of arrogance: 'we are open and up-to-date, while others are closed and old-fashioned!'"<sup>102</sup>. Although an ardent advocate of dialogue, he does not also hesitate to confess that Jesus Christ is God's "uniquely universal and universally unique"<sup>103</sup> gift to

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- 96. M. Vekathanam, "Sources of Jewish-christian specificity claims," in, K. Pathil (ed.), *Religious Pluralism. An Indian Christian Perspective*, Delhi 1991 (27-44) p. 29.
- 97. H. Fries, "Absolutheitsanspruch des christentums," in: J. Hofer et. al. (ed), *Lexikon fur Theologie und Kirche*, Freiburgi. Br. 1986, Vol. I, p. 73.
- 98. H. Küng, *op. cit.* p. 447.
- 99. Cf. K. Rahner, "On the Eternal Significance of the Humanity of Jesus." *art. cit.*, p. 40.
- 100. G. Moran, *op. cit.* p. 59.
- 101. S. Anand, *art. cit.* p. 415.
- 102. *Idem*, p. 417. cf. p. 415.
- 103. As cited by S. Anand, *Idem*, p. 412.

humanity. Let us also in this connection note that Abhishiktananda, who is recognized as a man of profound awareness of Hindu spirituality and a pioneer of inter-religious dialogue wrote in his diary in 1971: "There is no doubt that no other divine figure adorned by men is as pure as that of Jesus... Jesus is the Face of God towards men and the face of man towards God"<sup>104</sup>.

### c) Conclusion

It is the right of truth to be revealed and become truth (*aletheia*) and it is our duty and privilege to bear witness to it. This is valid especially in the case of God's salvific truth: the Word of God (Jn 17, 17). Since the Incarnation of God's Word who is God's perfect image, we have the truth of God in the human face of Jesus Christ. When we see Jesus, we see God so that with Apostle Thomas we confess and proclaim to him "My Lord my God" (Jn 20, 28). As the image of God, Jesus Christ retains the function of the cornerstone for ever and his humanity has

eternal significance for our salvation. He is the Lamb who is the eternal, Lamp of the heavenly Jerusalem (Rev. 20, 23). For he is the image of God who reflects in his face the salvific glory of God. (Cf. 2 Cor 4, 6) and the true light that enlightens every man (Jn 1, 9; 8, 12). It is, of course,<sup>105</sup> as Piris says, not the *interpretation*, nor saying "Lord, Lord" to Jesus, that saves, but *doing* the will of his Father (Mt 7, 21). But, is it not also the desire of God that all "come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2,4)? It may be pointed out here that God or "that ultimate Reality Christians know as the heavenly Father"<sup>106</sup> is not simply Father in heaven but the Father of Jesus Christ, whom he distinctively called "Abba" (e.g. Mk 14 36).<sup>107</sup> This "unique experience of intimate closeness to God" bears witness to his claim to unique uniqueness. But this is not to deny the uniqueness of the Buddha or any other religious figure. Although not as the Son or the image of God, they too are unique in some other way.

Sebastian Athappilly C. M. I.

104. A. Pieris, *art. cit.* p. 173.

105. J. Hick, "The Non-Absoluteness of Christianity," in: J. Hick & P.F. Knitter (ed), *op. cit.* (pp 17-36), p. 22.

106. B. Van Iersel, *art. cit.* p. 41. For an elaborate discussion on the theme of Jesus' Abba experience, cf. E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus, An Experiment in Christology*, pp 258ff.

107. A. Nolan, *Jesus Before Christianity*, Quezon City 1988, p. 124

## **"On Some Aspects of the Christian Meditation"**

Members of the Indian Theological Association who met at Poona in December 1990 were unhappy about the letter of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith; "On Some Aspects of Christian Meditation". The reasons are: "the predominantly negative ..... tone" of the document "in speaking of other religions" which they think is against the new Spirit ushered in by Vat. II, "ignorance of the real teaching of the great Hindu and Buddhist masters" and "a certain air of Christian triumphalism".

### **Predominantly Negative?**

The theologians admit that the document is timely and that there is some ground for disquiet because "of illinformed enthusiasm to Eastern Ways of meditation among western Christians". Such deviations and defective orientations can be clearly pointed out with clarity only in some negative way. However the expression "predominantly negative ..... tone" of the document in speaking of other religions seems to be exaggerated, which will be evident from a brief examination of the Letter. In the introduction, the letter says that the objective is to give "sure criteria of a doctrinal and pastoral character about Christian prayer in the context of many faithful asking the value of

non-christian forms of prayer (especially eastern methods) for Christians. Dealing with the "theological and spiritual implications" of the eastern methods, the letter shows how far the "eastern methods" could be incorporated into Christian prayer.

The letter first explains the intimate nature of Christian prayer in the light of revelation<sup>1</sup>. The New Testament faith acknowledges Jesus Christ the Incarnate Son of God as the definitive self-revelation of God, who reveals the depths of the divine love and who, through the spirit makes it possible for the faithful to enter into the divine depths. The New Testament authors spoke of the revelation of God in Christ, illuminated by the Holy Spirit. The entire gospel of John is a contemplation of the word of God made flesh. "For Paul the mystery of God is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of Wisdom and knowledge". The document, therefore, concludes to the necessity of Christ and the Spirit in prayer. The prayer of the Christian should be inserted into the Trinitarian movement. "It is in the Holy Spirit that the Son comes into the world to reconcile it to the Father through his works and sufferings. On the other hand, in this same movement and in the very same Spirit, the Son Incarnate returns to the Father".

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1. cfr. Letter, part II

Since we know the saving works of God manifested in Jesus through the Scriptures, the Church recommends the reading of the Word of God as a source of Christian prayer.

After pointing out some incorrect forms of prayer from the history of the Church, the letter mentions similar modern methods of meditation<sup>2</sup> which try to ascend to the Divine, setting aside the sense-perceptible and conceptually limited, instead of rising to God through the salvific works of God in Christ Jesus. Then the different Christian attempts to integrate eastern methods into Christian prayer are given. Some use the eastern methods only as a preparation for a truly Christian contemplation. There are others who use the eastern techniques to generate mystical experiences; some others consider the Buddhist Absolute without image or concepts equal to the majesty of God revealed in Jesus and in that attempt to know the absolute abandon meditation on the salvific works of the One and Triune God. Hence the letter speaks of the necessity of a thorough examination of the methods and contents of these attempts.<sup>3</sup> Then the letter proceeds to examine the "right way of prayer", the way of Christ, whose food is to do the Father's will and to accomplish his works (cfr. Jo 4, 134). Christian prayer likewise leads to the love of neighbour, action and acceptance of trials to fulfill the will of God like Christ. The letter attempts to explain the mystery of union with God. Even in the highest states of union with God, man essentially remains a creature distinct from God similar to the archetype, the Son, who remains 'other' from

the Father and the Spirit though the same in substance. Christ, in whom we have been created, "makes us participate in his Divine Nature without suppressing our created nature" which has been exalted and freed from destruction by Incarnation. The Christian experience of the Father in the Son through the H. Spirit reconciles perfect union with God and otherness with God.<sup>4</sup>

Now the letter considers the ways of achieving union with God in prayer, after having set forth the normative Christian way.<sup>5</sup> As long as they are helpful to genuine Christian prayer, they can be accepted. Such are the acceptance of a master, the stages of spiritual life: purification, illumination and union. When the Christian masters use the expression emptying the spirit of all sensible images in connection with purification, it must be understood as the images binding us to selfishness, not necessarily every creature God has given us. The letter affirms that from the dogmatic point of view it is impossible to attain perfect love of God apart from the Incarnate Son who was crucified for us as certified by the New Testament revelation. Illumination which follows purification through the love which the Father bestows on us in the Son and the Spirit is referred by Christian Writers to the baptismal illumination and which is the basis of subsequent growth in the knowledge of God.

The sacraments especially Baptism and the Eucharist form the objective beginning of the union with God and it would be the foundation of the

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2. cfr. Ibid. part III

3. cfr. Letter, part III

4. cfr. Ibid. part IV

5. cfr. Ibid. part V

mystical union, if a praying person is called for that. Though certain periods of retreat into prayer and recollection are needed, this union which is a free gift of God, cannot be attained by technique.

Next, the letter turns its attention (part VI) to psycho physical methods. Both western and eastern spiritual writers have dealt with the role of bodily posture in meditation. Eastern Christian meditation has valued psycho - physical symbolism, which however, is useful only for those who can transcend from the symbolism to God. While the letter warns against considering pleasant feeling created by some physical exercises as mystical, it does not deny the value of genuine eastern practices of meditation as suitable means which would help a praying person.

The document concludes with Christ the unique way to the Father, into which all the different ways of prayer in the Church should finally lead. Each person in selecting his way should be led by the Holy Spirit than personal tastes and when he tastes negative 'experiences' instead of positive 'experiences' it would become clear if he is really seeking love of God "the sole object of Christian contemplation".

From the study of the document, it is clear that the document has clarified and explained the essential nature of Christian prayer in the light of revelation and Christian tradition. Then after examining certain Christian attempts to integrate eastern ways with Christian contemplation, it affirms that such ways can be adopted in so far as they agree with the essential nature of Christian prayer. Perhaps the Indian Theologians were more concerned with a philosophical contemplation of God, than a Christian contemplation of God inspired

by the experience of the Father revealed by the Incarnate Son of God, the only way to the Father. In that case it is quite natural that the document appeared to them "predominantly negative in tone".

### Common Basis ?

The theologians have made only a general statement about the ignorance of the letter about Hindu and Buddhist masters. They did not, moreover, treat in detail "the common basis for understanding between the Christian revelation and the spiritual tradition of the world" so as to remove the ignorance of the document, except making a general statement that "such a basis is ready to hand in the traditional Christian philosophy of being especially in the fundamentally non-dualist Christian theology of creation as taught by St. Thomas Aquinas which echoes so strikingly the teaching of the eighth century Hindu Philosopher ... Sankaracharya."

There are two things to be noted regarding the affirmation made about St. Thomas and Sankaracharya. The theological vision of St. Thomas about creation is called non-dualist, a term traditionally used for Sankara's view of reality, and Sankara's view is called "radical dependence of all created things on the eternal Mystery...." which evidently has a Thomistic flavour. So it would appear that there is no fundamental difference between the two. It is true that the Absolute is ineffable and incomprehensible according to both. The perfection of being is fully realized only in the Absolute and the human categories would fit it only imperfectly.

But there is a fundamental difference between their visions of reality. St. Thomas' vision of reality is analogical whereas Sankara's is non-dualistic which is not the same as analogical.

According to Aquinas (and traditional Christian philosophy) the perfection of being is truly realized in God and the creatures. In this aspect being is predicated to them in the same way and we can say that there is unity and that being is non-dual. But this statement about being is not fully true, it is only partially true, since there is radical difference between God and creatures. The mode of realization of being is different in them. The perfection of being is infinite in God, His nature is *to exist*, He is *existence*, whereas the perfection of existence is realized in the creatures in a limited way. Their nature is not 'to be existence' but to be particular being (such as animal or plant); existence is not found in their essence, they have a received existence. The creatures are being because they depend on God through the creative activity of God. Creative activity means the production of something by God from absolute non-existence, and its continued preservation in existence. This activity does not involve any change on the part of God but only on the part of the creatures who come into existence with their particular natures. The creatures are radically different from God by their limitation, contingency and therefore they cannot be the same as God in 'higher knowledge' whereas for Sankaracharya, there is no created reality distinct from Brahman in 'higher knowledge'; the world is really Brahman or the appearance of the world and the self as distinct from Brahman is not real or true. The famous example used by Sankara to illustrate this truth is 'rope-snake'<sup>6</sup>. What is the reality of the snake in the rope which is mistaken as snake in the dim light? When there is clear sight the snake vanishes. So

the snake is superimposed on the rope. Likewise, the world is super-imposed on Brahman and when right knowledge dawns, Brahman alone exists. Advaitins express this sole existence of Brahman by a *sloka* (verse): "Brahma satyam jagamithya jivo Brahmaiva naparah (Brahman is reality, the world is unreality and the soul is Brahman) it is not different".

The affirmation "This teaching of radical dependence of all created beings on eternal mystery...contains nothing which is opposed to Christian teaching" is ambiguous. "The radical dependence of all created beings on the eternal mystery" is not found in all upanishads nor in Sankara. The upanishads speak of the world as an emanation from Brahman or a transformation of Brahman or Brahman itself. Some may find it in the *maya* of Sankara. But *maya*, though essentially dependant on Brahman, is not distinct from Brahman in higher knowledge; it would vanish in higher knowledge, revealing the sole reality of Brahman.

#### Mutual Indwelling?

The Johannine "Mutual Indwelling" cannot be explained by philosophies not admitting the ontological distinction of 'the self and the Eternal Self'. If the 'self' is not distinct from the 'Eternal Self' entitively, then the finite self disappears into the Eternal Self and the so called mutual indwelling would become the presence of the Eternal Self to itself or in itself. The Christian experience of the mutual indwelling never denies the creatureliness of the experiencer. But the advaitic theory of Sankaracharya denies the entitative distinction of the

6. *Kathabhashya* 1, 3, 13

7. Sharma C., A *Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsi das, Delhi, 1964, p. 273.

finite self from the Eternal Self or Brahman. It is due to ignorance alone that the finite self is perceived as distinct from the Eternal Self; in truth it really is, it really was, the Eternal Self. But if the experience of the Eternal Self as one's own self refers to the philosophy of Ramanuja, then, though the soul is distinct from God, it is co-eternal with God, it is not a created being. The true Christian experience of the indwelling of the Eternal is profound and incomprehensible mystery because the created fragile finite creature experiences the indwelling of the Eternal Infinite. Uncreated Being within itself and sees itself within the same Eternal God in the light of faith in Christ the revealing Son of God. The Christian encounters, not an abstract Being, not a Thou of eternal loneliness but the Eternal Father, Son and the Spirit of the divine nature, in the unity of nature.

### Ignorance of the Masters?

The theologians have referred to the Buddhist masters without naming them. Since there are many divisions and sub-divisions in Buddhism it is difficult to know who are meant. Buddha himself did not admit a supreme being. He was not interested in theoretical and metaphysical questions, which according to him was useless for 'Nirvana'. He qualified reality as anitya (momentary), anatma (substanceless) and dukha (painful)<sup>8</sup>. When Buddha was questioned about the self by Vacchagotta the recluse, he remained silent. (cfr. Samyukta Nikhaya 4,400-1). Though he has spoken about "an Unborn, Unoriginated, Uncreated, Unformed" (Udana 8,3) it seems to be the state of Nirvana than a supreme Being,

because there is no effort to know such a being, or revere such a being, not to speak of seeking its help. He only insists on human effort to attain nirvana. "But each one has to struggle for himself, the perfect ones have only pointed the way." (*Dhammapada* 276). In the explanation of the eightfold path which is the way to nirvana, Buddha does not mention any relation to an absolute being. The Hinayana which considers Buddha as a mere man, follows this tradition. In the council of Vaisali, the monks who had defended the doctrine of Atman were expelled from the order.

In Mahayana Buddhism, Buddha is considered a supreme Being who is merciful. "All those who have enough faith in me, enough affection, are bound for heaven." (*Majjhima Nikhaya* 1, 142) When this Mahayana spread to China and Japan, it underwent some transformations assimilating Chinese and Japanese beliefs and wisdom. The Ch'an sect (China) devoted to contemplation (dhyana, ch'an) became Zen in Japan (Japanese word for ch'an) The term ch'an shows its spirit of independence and disregard for Buddhist scriptures and aversion to reasoning. Ch'an values reasoning and thinks that enlightenment is a sudden act.<sup>9</sup> This insistence on meditation to attain nirvana in Ch'an and Zen is a return to Buddha's emphasis on meditation for enlightenment.<sup>10</sup> The insistence on self-reliance for liberation cannot agree with the Christian idea of salvation through Jesus Christ. In the advanced Zen meditation there is no fixing of attention on any object, but emptying the mind of thoughts. "Zazen (an imperfect equivalent is meditation) means to stop thinking."<sup>11</sup> The teaching

8. *Samyutta Nikaya* 12, 66

9. E. Conze, *Buddhism*, p. 206 f

10. N. W. Ross, *Buddhism*, p. 142

11. N. W. Ross, *Buddhism*, p. 14

of the great masters of Ch'an and Zen does not imply that illumination is "being present to the Transcendent in love." But true to the original spirit of Buddha who never admitted a transcendent 'other' nirvana is only freedom from transitoriness and changes, freedom from every sort of restrictions. Therefore it is said that one should not have any goal at all when one practises zazen.<sup>12</sup>

In fact this Zen experience is the same as advaitic experience of Sankara; Buddha and Zen practically deny the self and try to get rid of the self without affirming the infinite self, but it appears that freedom from the self and changes is the entry into the infinite changeless state or realizing the infinite changeless state. The implicit thinking is that the real nature of man is this infinite or changeless state and Buddhahood means this awareness. This awareness is non-communicable, therefore the seeker is asked to realize it by his own effort. Zen tried to communicate it non-verbally, in riddles and cryptic meaningless sayings. Since man's true nature was this changeless state, no superior help or prayer was needed, but only its awareness through meditation (Ch'an, Zen).

Sankara and the advaitins denied the self and tried to remove the consciousness of the self through knowledge and affirmed the sole existence of Brahman and that the true self of man was identical with Brahman. True knowledge removed this ignorance and consequently meditation or jnana alone is needed for liberation. The illumination is the awareness that one's true nature is the infinite nature of Brahman. Sankara explicitly affirms that man's true nature is the infinite changeless

state (of Brahman) whereas Buddha and Zen affirm it only implicitly.

Therefore the intervention of the Congregation regarding 'Some aspects of the Christian meditation' is just and right. Christian prayer necessarily springs from the experience of Christian revelation. As we have seen, there is fundamental difference between the basic vision of Christian revelation and advaitic-Buddhist vision. The God of Christian revelation is the Trinitarian God revealed by Jesus Christ, who has allowed the rational creatures to participate in his nature keeping their identity as creatures. This participation in the divine nature is not merited by them, though they have to co-operate with the free gift of God to be confirmed in this participation which is salvation. In Advaitic-Buddhist vision salvation is worked out by man alone through knowledge (vidya, prajna) since he has really changeless infinite nature.

#### New Spirit?

The statement of the theologians refers to the 'new spirit' and 'new vision' of Vat. II. It seems that they focuss their attention only on the partial vision (new vision) neglecting the integral vision of the Council. The council has no doubt about the nature of the Catholic Church and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. As a consequence the Council has no confusion about the nature of non-Christian religious and the uniqueness of the Church founded by Christ who is sent by the Father into the world and who said "He who has seen me, has seen the Father" (Jo. 14, 19) and "He who receives me, receives Him who sent me" (Mt. 10,40). About the non-Christian religions, the Council says that they 'often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men'. About

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12. ID., p. 154

the Church the Council has this consciousness; "Indeed she proclaims and must ever proclaim Christ, the Way, the Truth and the Life (Jo. 14, 6), in whom men find the fulness of religious life and in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself (cfr, 2 Cor. 5, 18-19)." <sup>13</sup> Again, "Therefore all must be converted to Him as He is made known by the Church's preaching. All must be incorporated into Him by baptism, and into the Church which is His body. For Christ Himself in explicit terms...affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism (cfr. Mk. 16, 16, Jo. 3,5), and thereby affirmed the necessity of the Church ...The members of the Church are impelled to carry on such missionary activity by reason of the love with which they love God and by which they desire to share with all men the spiritual goods of both this life and the life to come."<sup>14</sup>

Therefore no member of the Church can close his eyes to the fact that Christ is the unique revelation of God and the only way to the Father and the necessity of accepting Christ by being incorporated into the Church, To experience the love of God manifested in and through Christ, is to acknowledge and proclaim with thanks and praises the divine riches experienced in the Church. Some, in their eagerness to dialogue with others may see such attitude as 'Christian triumphalism,' but for the sincere believer it is authentic Christianity, authentic following of Christ Who did not compromise with truth but affirmed His equality with God though He had to pay for that with the sacrifice of His life.

Rev. Dr. Gabriel Aranjaniyil C. M. I.

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13. Vat. II. Non-Christians no. 2

14. Vat. II. Missions no. 7

# Repentance and Penitence in Mar Aprem of Nisibis

Mar Aprem of Nisbis<sup>1</sup> is the most celebrated amongst the Syriac Fathers. The poet – theologian of the fourth century whose literary output is enormous, became renowned beyond the frontiers of the Syriac world even during his lifetime and his writings were translated into Greek and Armenian shortly after his death if not during his lifetime itself, and are still widely used. It is true that he was not known much in the West mainly on account of the Syriac language and because some western writers passed negative judgments on him.<sup>2</sup> But the present century has witnessed a great awakening of interest in early Syriac theology. During this period of rediscovery, Aprem is amongst the main Syriac Fathers being appreciated and approached by numerous authors.

## Mar Aprem: Life

Aprem, a junior contemporary of Aphrahat, was born in or around Nisibis (Mesopotamia) around the year 306 in a Christian family. As a youth, he was influenced by Mar Jacob, the saintly bishop of Nisibis whom Aprem followed as a true disciple. During the period of Mar Jacob's successors he was active in ecclesial life.<sup>3</sup> He had to flee from his native town along with the other Christians after 363, probably, about the year 367<sup>4</sup>, when Nisibis was ceded to the Persians and became a part of the Sassanide empire. Then he settled in Edessa (*Urhay*), about 100 miles west of Nisibis, in the Eastern Roman empire. It is commonly accepted that Aprem is behind the foundation of the famous ‘school of the Persians’ (of Edessa).<sup>5</sup> There too, he was fully

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1. St. Ephrem of Nisibis.
2. ‘His writings are without much content, extraordinarily prolix; his style is allusive and unnatural’ etc. see, BURKITT, *Early Eastern Christianity*, 96–100, 108–110; WRIGHT, *Syriac Literature*, 1. For the full bibliography, see “Abbreviations” at the end of this article.
3. There were three successors to Mar Jacob during his time in Nisibis: Babu, Valgesh and Abraham. Cfr. *CNis* 13–21.
4. For a correction of the date 363; see, YOUSIF, “Symbolisme Christologique”, 7.
5. Cfr. VOOBUS, “Aprem and the School of Urhai”; VOOBUS, *History of the School of Nisibis*, CSCO 266, Sub 26, Louvain 1965, 7ff.

occupied as a deacon and a teacher. It is almost certain that he died in 373. He is known under various titles like *the prophet of Syria, the harp of the Spirit, the sun of the Syrians*. Pope Benedict XV proclaimed him Doctor of the Church on 5th October 1920.<sup>6</sup>

### Works of Aprem

Aprem, who is the most celebrated and voluminous writer among the early Syriac writers, was an orthodox theologian and a religious poet whose works include exegetical, dogmatic, polemical, ascetical, liturgical and other writings.<sup>7</sup> The enormous quantity of writings that has come down to us under his name in prose and poetry, is not completely genuine; a good number of them are accepted as authentic, some however, are doubtful.

Some of his works are polemical (e. g. *PrRef*); others are *commentaries, homilies and hymns*. The most important of the commentaries are those on Genesis and Exodus<sup>8</sup>, on the *Dialessaron* (the Gospel harmony)<sup>9</sup> and on the Epistles of St. Paul<sup>10</sup>. Many of the homilies (*memrē*) edited by Lamy and Assemani<sup>11</sup> are of doubtful authenticity. His homilies on Faith (*SdF*), on Virginity (*SdV*) and on our Lord (*SDN*) are the most important ones. The hymns (*madrasē*) in varying metrical systems (five-syllabled and seven syllabled are his preferred ones) make his name famous. "It is in his *Hymns* that Ephraim lives", J. Gwynn notes rightly.<sup>12</sup> The Syriac hymnody has a distinctive and attractive nature which the Greek Churches follow.<sup>13</sup> It is through the hymns that the poetic artistry of Aprem radiates.

6. For details on the life and works of Mar Aprem; ORTIZ de URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 56–76; BAUMSTARK, *Syrischen Literatur*, 31–53; BECK, "Ephrem le Syrien"; EMEREAU, "Saint Ephrem le Syrien", 1–10; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XIII*, 120–152 (Introductory Dissertation by J. Gwynn); VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism II*, 70–92; HALLEUX, "Ephrem le Syrien", 328–343; BROCK, "Luminous Eye", 3–7; BROCK, *Harp*, 6–8; MURRAY, *Symbols*, 29–32; PERNIOLA, *Sant' Efrem Siro*, 3–48.
7. Cfr. ORTIZ de URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 61–73.
8. For the edition and translation; see, *GET* in the abbreviations.
9. For the Syriac and Armenian editions; see, *CDiat Syr* and *CDiat Arm*. The Armenian edition and its Latin translation came out first from the Mekitarist Fathers of St. Lazaro, Venice 1836, 1876.
10. The Armenian version with Latin translation is published by the Mekitarist Fathers of St. Lazaro, Venice 1836, 1893; see, *Epi*.
11. See, LAMY, *Hymni et Sermones*, and ASSEMANI in the abbreviations.
12. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XIII*, 147.
13. J. Gwynn writes: "The Syriac Hymnody is constructed on the Hebrew principle of parallelism, in which thought answers to thought in clauses of repetitive or antithetical balance: but unlike the Hebrews, its clauses are further regulated by strict equivalence of syllabic measure"; *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XIII*, 148. On Aprem's influence on Greek hymnody; 'see PETERSEN, *Sources of Romanos*.

The hymns vary in content and style: polemic (e. g. *Contra Haereses*), dogmatic (e. g. *De Fide*), ascetical (e. g. *De Virginitate*, *De Ecclesia*), liturgical (e. g. *De Nativitate*, *De Ieiunio*). But this is not an absolute division, something which is impossible in Aprem. He meditates on the different aspects of the Christian life and so jumps from one to another, sometimes even in the same verse. They are all interwoven in one reality – Christian life, Christ being its centre. Besides, the titles of the collections of hymns which are normally the titles of the first group of hymns, (they are collected to hymn cycles after the time of Aprem) are not so important and revelatory. The editions and German translations of Dom Edmund Beck are of these hymns (in CSCO series).

### Asceticism

The disobedience of the first parents brought to an end to the glorious life of Paradise. Even though Christ has opened the closed door of the Paradise to mankind, and even though one can enter into that glorious life through the mysteries of Baptism and Eucharist, the perfect acquisition of the new Paradise realized in Christ depends on free human acts. The state of mankind at present is almost like that of Adam and Eve. Human race is in an intermediary state with regard to life and glory. Christ has prepared for mankind a new Paradise, new Fruit of the *tree of life*, new life and glory. But it is up to every one to attain this marvellous treasure through one's own free acts of love.

Just as God wanted Adam to win the crown of the promised life through his own free act of love towards his Creator, man has to prove his love towards God through sacrifices for love.

For all these ancient writers<sup>14</sup>, man was above all a free will, capable of love and of sacrifice for love. Therefore all human perfection consisted for them in charity and in the abnegation which proves it.<sup>15</sup>

The salvific act of Jesus was nothing but fulfilling the will of His Father. The union with and love for God demand a radical abnegation from us as we read in the Gospels (Lk 6, 20; 12, 33; 14, 26, 33; Jn 15, 19). So the early asceticism has its origin in the New Testament.<sup>16</sup> Another aspect of the early asceticism is that it was conceived as a substitute for martyrdom when persecution has ended. The terminologies (e. g. *athlete*, *contest*, *battle* etc.) that were used once for martyrdom are applied also to asceticism.<sup>17</sup>

The present scholarly opinion is that the Syriac asceticism has a native origin inspired from the Gospels. This rich native ascetical tradition was later influenced by Egyptian monasticism. The *B'nay Qyamā* and *Bnat Qyama* of the time of Aphrahat and Aprem point to the pre-monastic asceticism of the Syriac Churches. At least until the end of the stay of Aprem in Nisibis, he

14. Including Aprem.

15. HAUSHERR, "Eastern Spirituality", 116.

16. BROCK, "Early Syrian Asceticism", 1-4.

17. BROCK, "Early Syrian Asceticism", 2; VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism*, II 99.

represented this pre-monastic Syriac asceticism and therefore most probably he was not a monk in the later sense of the term<sup>18</sup>.

Aprem comes from a Christian community which practised a rigid asceticism and which had to withstand extreme unorthodox ascetical practices like the encratism of Mani, Marcion and Valentinus.<sup>19</sup> He had to fight against the extreme radical ascetical groups to uphold the orthodoxy. It is wrong to conclude that early East Syriac asceticism derives from a *contempt for the human condition and hatred of the body*. On the contrary, it derives from a higher motivation to return to the original state of the Paradise (basis in the Holy Bible, union with the nature), to become identified with Christ who restored the original state (perfect discipleship to Christ) and to be counted as members of the eschatological Kingdom (to become like the angels).<sup>20</sup>

The ascetical ideals of Aprem are based on the above mentioned early East Syriac asceticism: it is a way to the lost-Paradise, to the new life and glory in Christ, to the eschatological Paradise. It is a full imitation of Christ to become identified with Christ. It is a strive for purity, perfection and life (that was lost in the Paradise) through virginity, abstinence, fasting and penitence, prayer and vigil, mortification and self-control, by evading the occasions of sin in the use of nature and by renouncing the nature that leads to sin. This life is not one of seclusion from the community, but that of active participation whenever it is necessary.<sup>21</sup>

### Repentance and Penitence

Remorse of heart of Adam and Eve followed their first sin. *There resulted remorse of soul (twat napsā) as the end of action (HEccl 35,17)*. God gave repentance as a means to return to the life and glory of the Paradise. And when he (=Adam) repented, he returned to his dwelling and kingdom. *Blessed be He who taught us to repent so that we may return to Paradise (HParad 13,6; cfr. H Parad 7-11)*. Sheol, the kingdom of Death, is detestable mainly because it is a pit where no repentance is possible that eventually leads to life (CNis 52,22).

Our dolorous situation in the present life leads to repentance and tears. Penitence, penance and all other ascetical works emerge from this repentance. God who gave Adam the opportunity to repent gives us also the same chance for the forgiveness of the sins:

- 18 Cfr. BECK, "Ascétisme et monachisme" 276-277, 289-290, 298; BROCK, "Early Syrian Asceticism" 3, 11; See also, VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism I*, 145ff; JARGY, "Les origines du monachisme," 110-125; LELOIR, *Doctrines* 53-67; SPIDLICK, "Syrian Spirituality."
- 19. See, VOOBUS, *Celibacy, A Requirement*, 13-20; VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism I*, 31-61.
- 20. DRIJVERS, "Hellenistic and Oriental Origins," 30-31; DRIJVERS, "Facts and Problems," 171; VOOBUS, *Celibacy, A Requirement*, 33-34; BROCK, "Early Syrian Asceticism" 11-12, 18-19, FRANK, *Engelgleichen Leben*, 140-146.
- 21. BECK, "Ascétisme et monachisme", 281; MARTIKAINENS, *Da Böse*, 5.

God, who had pity on Adam \*\*\* and gave him opportunity to repent, opened the door to our penitence (*tyabutā*). \*\*\* Blessed is He who forgives our debts.

Blessed is He who multiplies our treasures (*HEccl* 45,33).

Our mortal and sinful life urges us to turn to God with a sorrowful heart. Those who rely on the mercy of God will attain eternal life. Aprem urges us to meditate on human life in this world. That will lead us to rely on divine mercy, not on human power. In the words of Aprem:

Reconcile and be in peace, o blooming ones;  
for, men fade one after the other.

Walk upon the earth as people  
who will be brought under its (= of earth) wing tomorrow.

Blessed be he who thinks that he is mortal (*HEccl* 16, 4)!

I hope for (*h'ar*) Your mercy; \*\*\* under Your wings I take shelter.  
I feel ashamed at my follies \*\*\* let my debts be blot out through your all-purifying hyssop (*HVirg* 41,2).

Repentance and diligence are requisites for both the corporeal and spiritual worlds. The penitent is on the side of the justified. Aprem blames those who are inactive:

Repentance (*tyabuta*) and diligence \*\*\* are required for both the worlds; for the service of the earth diligent ones, \*\*\* for the service of the spirit, penitents.

Even if not rich the diligent one, \*\*\* his diligence remains to himself. And the penitent although indebted \*\*\* is on the side of the justified. The wretched and the sinners have put on \*\*\* an entirely bad name. Shame to the inactive \*\*\* and disgrace to the sinners (*HVirg* 7,1).

Remorse is something beautiful that is hidden in the human nature (*HEccl* 3,4). Even if human will justifies itself, the remorse that is concealed in the will accuses the sinner:

In the (purifying) fire of the sinner \*\*\* fraud is believed (to exist); because, while unclean in his will \*\*\* he blames his Creator.

(But) the remorse (*twatā*) that is hidden in it \*\*\* is enough to his indictment (*HEccl* 3,3).

Repentance is like a Baptism that washes away our guilt (*CNis* 1,5). It is the medicine which gives life to those who are dead to sin. We have the example of the Ninevites in *HVirg* 49<sup>22</sup>.

14. Nineveh repented, \*\*\* Jonah was sad;  
the physician was perturbed \*\*\* because his medicine triumphed.
15. Whose medicine \*\*\* among the physicians  
gave cure to ten times \*\*\* ten thousand sick persons!

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22. *HVirg* 42–50 are on *Jonah and Nineveh*.

16. The remedy of repentance<sup>23</sup> \*\*\* came down from above.  
It distributed pardon (*husayâ*) \*\*\* among the debts.

21. The voice of Jonah \*\*\* was the medicine of life (*samhayyê*).  
It sowed with it death \*\*\* and there sprout life.

The repentance of the sinful woman (Lk 7,36ff), and her deep faith in Jesus, purified her beauty, sanctified her body, and brought her back to life. Her sins were wiped out when she wiped the feet of Christ. Jesus accepted the invitation of the Pharisee not because of hunger, but because of the penance of that sinful woman (SDN XIV). Aprem describes that event:

Her ornaments and plaiting of hair that led the visitors (*hazzayê*)<sup>24</sup> to sin

were a towel to you, since they wiped your feet (Lk 7,38; Jn 13,4). Iscariot whom you washed wronged your towel.

Through that, through which she was lost, was she found since she believed.

Since the oil that made her guilty shone forth  
and her mouth that defiled her was sanctified;  
and her beauty that made her vile was purified (HVirg 35,7)<sup>25</sup>

The life-giving aspect of repentance is again evident in the following stanzas. They speak of the repentance of Nineveh:

The people whom you brought to life \*\*\* blessed you, O Jonah !  
You carried blessings \*\*\* instead of curses (HVirg 50, 1)  
They had made crowns \*\*\* of repentance (*tyabuta*)  
They crowned me<sup>26</sup> through you \*\*\* since they lived by you (HVirg 50,2).

Man must do penance to return to the pure state of the first Paradise (SdF 6, 465-472; 6, 505).<sup>27</sup> Aprem views penitence and the spirit of penitence as an attitude of life (HVirg 3,10); passing remorse is not enough. Prayer, fasting, vigilance and above all tears are expressions of this attitude.<sup>28</sup> Doing penitence and penance is the guarantee of a real conversion. In the following hymn Aprem makes a clear distinction between repentance and remorse and then strongly advocates repentance.

Acquire repentance (*tyabuta*) that last and not remorse  
(*twat napša*) that (comes) in every hour.<sup>29</sup>  
For, only repentance (*tyabuta*) cures for ever our sores.  
Remorse (*twat napša*), on the other hand, earns (just) this,  
(namely) always building up and breaking down grief.

23. *Sām tayyabē*; literally *means*, *the remedy of repentents*.

24. *Hazzayê* means those who see; the spectators.

25. Cfr. SDN XIV-XVII.

26. Nineveh.

27. See, MARTIKAINEN, *Das Böse*, 49.

28. See, BECK, "Ephrem le Syrien", 797-798.

29. Something that comes and goes.

O body, if you get accustomed to repent and again to fall into sin,  
then remorse (*twat napša*) is the seal of the document of your guilt  
(*HVirg* 3,10) !

The Ninevites did penitence and penance observing fast and putting on sack clothes. Their repentance saved them from the wrath of God. Their act of penitence became a sign of life. Aprem tells that story in *HVirg* 45:

- 5. Nineveh bore fasting as bunches of grapes  
and every almsgiving as clusters of grapes.<sup>30</sup>
- 6. In the place of grape bunches \*\*\* covered with leaves  
its children<sup>31</sup> \*\*\* had put on sack clothes.
- 24. Writing (of names) was strewn \*\*\* upon every lot;  
and ash was scattered \*\*\* upon every sack cloth:
- 25. lots hat fell \*\*\* as it were for death;  
and sack clothes that were spread \*\*\* as it were for life.
- 26. The lot caught \*\*\* the servant who fled;  
and the sack cloth subdued \*\*\* the city that was in revolt.
- 27. The lot carried \*\*\* many through one man;  
and the sack cloth resuscitated \*\*\* many for the sake of one.
- 28. By the former<sup>32</sup> were opened \*\*\* lips for blaming;  
by the latter<sup>33</sup> was opened \*\*\* mouth for petition.<sup>34</sup>

While the lot brought judgment and death, the sack clothes, on the contrary, opened the door of divine mercy that gave them life and made them worthy of the heavenly kingdom. *HVirg* 45. 29–31 explicitly mention of salvation as entry into life. To note Aprem:

- 29. The lot denounced \*\*\* one and gave him to death;  
the sack cloth, however, pitied, \*\*\* and gave life to many.
- 30. The former was the cause \*\*\* of judgment and led to death,  
and the latter was the treasury \*\*\* of life and it gave salvation  
(*hayyē*).
- 31. The lot wrote down \*\*\* names below;  
the sack cloth, (however), wrote \*\*\* names above.<sup>35</sup>

The Ninevites did penitence not because of any immediate war or danger, but because they listened to the call for conversion (*CNis* 2,10). Their penitence is a *type* of our penitence (*HdF* 87,3). The deliverance of the city of Nisibis from the hands of the enemies was not because of their righeousness but

30. According to the Syriac text order: *Nineveh, as bunches of grapes, \*\*\* bore fasting and as clusters of grapes \*\*\* every almsgiving.*

31. Children of Nineveh.

32. The lot.

33. Sack cloth.

34. Literally, *mouth of petition*.

35. In heaven.

because of their penitence (*CNis* 3,5). Their sack clothes were breastplates of salvation (*CNis* 6,4). In the words of Nisibis (personified):

Their sackcloth is humble for my sake; their ashes are spirinkled in my affliction; their prayer is for my victory; their fast for my deliverance: Lo! the debt is on my ascetics, the guilt with my nobles (*CNis* 7,9).<sup>36</sup>

#### a. Tears

Tears of repentance or penitence is an external sign of an internal remorse and pain. A true penitent is a mourner ('abila).<sup>37</sup> Tears have the power to open the door of God's mercy (*HArm* 1,25-26). The mercy of God cannot be bought by anyone, but God gives His mercy in exchange of tears (*CNis* 1, 17). One example is of the sinful woman of Lk 7,36-50 who entered and received expiation of her sins through her tears (*HArm* 27,4-10). The tears of human eyes wipe out the bond of debts (*HVirg* 13,9). Aprem's own feelings when he had a vision of the last day of judgment show forth the correct disposition of a repentant heart:

My heart was filled with bitter groans, in the hope that somehow my stains might be washed white in my tears. I remembered the good Lord and gentle God, who wipes out the bond of debtors' debt through tears who accepts weeping in place of burnt sacrifices...Instead of a libation of wine (I will offer) tears that propitiate (*LPub* 24).

Tears water the earth of repentance so that it quickly produces fruits of repentance. They are very dear to God. We have the example of Ninevites narrated in *HVirg* 47:

3. Tears of repentance \*\*\* flew in it (= Nineveh) and its earth rejected \*\*\* all pomps.
4. For, quick was \*\*\* the growth of fruits of this very earth \*\*\* of repentance.
5. Tears moistened it (= Nineveh); \*\*\* mercy sprang forth in it; weeping poured down as rain in it; \*\*\* compassion sprouted in it.
6. The fruits that Nineveh produced below, the Heavenly King saw and desired them.<sup>38</sup>
7. The Exalted One desired \*\*\* the tasty fruit because it is a fruit that tear-watering produced<sup>39</sup>.
8. The Exalted One hungered \*\*\* much for its tears because He had tasted repentance in its fruits.<sup>40</sup>

36. Translation from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XIII*, 176.

37. Cfr. FRANK, *Engelgleichen Leben*, 144-46.

38. According to the Syriac text order: *The fruits that produced \*\*\* Nineveh below saw and desired them \*\*\* the Heavenly King.*

39. According to the Syriac word order: *because it is a fruit that produced \*\*\* tear watering.*

40. According to the Syriac word order: *because repentance He \*\*\* had tasted in its fruits.*

The Ninevites wove flowers of prayer which were watered with tears (*HVirg* 50,4). Ashes and tears gave them hope (*HVirg* 50,7). They brought forth mercy and reconciliation. Even though tears cause gloomy faces, the result will be joy. To quote from *HVirg* 50:

10. Ash and tears \*\*\* were offering (*qurbana*);  
at the door of heaven<sup>41</sup> \*\*\* they procured reconciliation.
11. There streamed forth tears \*\*\* that remained hidden in the eyes;  
(and) there streamed forth mercy \*\*\* that remained hidden in heaven (*rawma*).
12. Tears streamed out \*\*\* and cast gloom upon the faces.  
Mercy streamed out \*\*\* and made them cheerful.

Thus tears appear as a true sign of internal repentance. Tears reach heaven quickly and shed forth divine mercy. So tears along with repentance help mankind to enter into the life of salvation.

#### **b. Penitence and God's Mercy**

God's mercy is showered abundantly upon the penitents. Those who approach Him with remorse of the soul will not be rejected. Penitence is the ark of mercy which opens its door to sinners, and its harbour is a pure heart. Aprem instructs us to seek earnestly for this ark of mercy:

To the door of the ark were running  
the groups of men; but it did not open.  
To the animals it (= the ark) opened the door.  
But it closed it (= the door) against the sinners.  
Penitence (*tyabuta*) is the ark of mercy, brethren.  
Let us earnestly desire this same lover of mankind  
(namely), that which shuts against the animals  
the door; (but) opens it to men.  
The mountain (Gen 8,4) was the harbour to the ark.  
A Pure heart is your<sup>42</sup> harbour (*HEccl* 34, 3).

Penitence is the 'city of refuge, of the New Testament (*HEccl* 34, 1-2). Contrary to the Old Testament cities of refuge (e.g. *Num* 35, 16ff. ; *Deut* 19, 12)<sup>43</sup>, it receives all the sinners who repent, but it knows the severity of justice too:

The arms of penitence (*tyabuta*) are spread  
to embrace all who approach it. Grace is depicted in you,  
O lover of the wretched, as its Lord<sup>44</sup> (Himself) (*HEccl* 34, 7)  
For, the towns of refuge  
were formed according to the symbol of anger and mercy.

41. *Rawma*, the high.

42. Of penitence.

43. On city of refuge in Syriac tradition; see, MURRAY, Symbols, 297-298.

44. Lord of grace. E. Beck takes this as 'your Lord' (= Lord of penitence).

And justice along with goodness  
 are formed together in penitence (*tyabutā*)  
 in symbol of the towns. And since the law does not love  
 him who willingly commits murder,  
 justice did not accept  
 the Iscariot who repented badly.  
 The infidels who renounced<sup>45</sup> were ashamed  
 and reviled the just law<sup>46</sup> (*HEccl* 34,8).

God's mercy is poured only on those who regretfully approach Him. Those who reject the mercy of God by refusing to regret will be condemned. Again the image of the 'city of refuge' is used in the following hymn to illustrate this:

The maimed, blind and lame  
 at all slipping places that occurred to them  
 could not arrive at  
 the town of refuge on account of the persecutors:  
 a symbol of the sleepy, dissolute and the lazy  
 who do not want to approach penitence (*tyabutā*).  
 Through those who want but can not  
 are condemned those who can but do not want (*HEccl* 34, 9).

Aprem discusses penitence and God's mercy in detail when he deals with the repentance of the Ninevites. Mercy comes from grace and collects the fruits of repentance. Sin and justice become sad in the face of repentance and mercy: since iniquity and debts are quenched through them. To quote from *HVirg* 47.

9. He came down and opened \*\*\* the treasury of mercy (*rahmē*) that He may buy by His mercy \*\*\* the fruits of His servants.
10. But when he measured the mercy \*\*\* and received the fruits, the Revenger (*labo a*) rejoiced \*\*\* because He Himself was revenged!
11. Who has (ever) seen \*\*\* servants and their Lord<sup>47</sup>  
 who exchange to Him \*\*\* fruits with mercy !

Here Aprem is clear that repentance and penitence are not the price for mercy and pardon. As the following hymns elaborate, divine mercy is a grace and therefore man receives it not out of merit, but as a divine gift. This leads to the conclusion that salvation is always a gift of God. Aprem says in *HVirg* 47:

12. Whose yard- stick perhaps \*\*\* served there  
 that was sufficient to measure \*\*\* tears and mercy!
13. It is the yard-stick that the two (things) \*\*\* measured  
 and sealed,namely, repentance \*\*\* and grace<sup>48</sup>.

45. The Marcionites.

46. Another possible translation:

"and on account of the law (*they*) reviled the just One."

47. According to the Syriac word order:

*Servants and their Lord \*\*\* who has seen.*

48. See the homophony: *tyabutā* 'am *taybutā*.

14. Through him repentance \*\*\* yielded fruits;  
through him grace \*\*\* yielded mercy<sup>49</sup>.
15. The two tasted \*\*\* from the two.  
Since they gave and received, \*\*\*both rejoiced.
16. Two<sup>50</sup> had rejoiced \*\*\* and two were sad;  
(namely, here) below sin, \*\*\* above justice.
17. Sin was sad \*\*\* because iniquity was quenched;  
again justice \*\*\* because debt was quenched.
20. For, Nineveh had turned out to be a ship<sup>51</sup>,  
(divine) wrath made it totter; \*\*\* mercy held it steadfast.
21. Every sailor lifted up his ship<sup>52</sup>  
Jonah (however) saw that he caused his ship sink<sup>53</sup>.

Jonah was thrown in to the sea in order that the city of Nineveh would not be ruined. It was the mercy of God that brought him out of the sea. But he forgot the mercy of God when he was on land. Aprem narrates the story in *Hvrig* 47:

22. For, they left (*hpak*) him \*\*\* in the sea that he might learn  
that on land the city would not be at ruin<sup>54</sup>.
23. The man sank; \*\*\* by mercy he came up.  
He whom (mercy) drew up \*\*\* waited that (the city) might be destroyed.
24. Out of mercy he came up; \*\*\* but he forgot the mercy.

What he learned in the sea, \*\*\* he betrayed on land (Jonah 4, 1–5). But the city of Nineveh overcame fear and evaded the destruction through ash sackcloth and tears. God's mercy came down from heaven and reconciliation took place. The gloomy faces became cheerful and the mission of Jonah ended in joy. To quote from *HVrig* 50:

6. Ash and sackcloth \*\*\* which make beauty fade;  
through them there flourished \*\*\* the crowns of the saints.
7. Ash and weeping \*\*\* which blur the eyes  
enlightened \*\*\* the eyes of the Ninevites.<sup>55</sup>
8. Ash and sackcloth \*\*\* she<sup>56</sup> offered (as) bride.  
She overcame the iniquity \*\*\* of that adversary.

49. According to the Syriac text order:  
Through him yielded \*\*\* fruits, repentance;  
through him yielded \*\*\* mercy, grace.
50. Mercy and grace.
51. According to the Syriac word order:  
For turned out to be \*\*\* a ship, Nineveh.
52. According to the Syriac word order:  
lifted up his ship \*\*\* every sailor.
53. According to the Spriac word order:  
Jonah, his ship \*\*\* saw that he caused it sink.
54. According to the Syriac word order:  
that it would not be at ruin \*\*\* the city on land.
55. According to the Syriac text order: *the eyes of the Ninevites \*\*\* enlightened*.
56. Nineveh.

9. She dispelled fear \*\*\* because she scattered ash.  
She cast down warth \*\*\* because she extended (*mekat*) sackcloth.

13. O Jonah, you left \*\*\* (and) bore woe;  
but, you came carrying \*\*\* enviable bliss.

Aphrem's thoughts on repentance and penitence belong to the early Syriac asceticism which is pre-monastic. They come within the frame of his vision of salvation: lost-paradise, Christ, Church and eschatological Paradise. Meditation on the lost-Paradise and on the present human condition naturally leads to repentance, tears and penitence (as happened to Adam and Eve). They bring divine mercy to us (e. g. Nineveh and the sinful woman), and thereby forgiveness of sin and salvation.

Rev. Dr. Mathew Paikkatt

## ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Arm</i>	Armenian.
<i>CDiat Arm</i>	Commentary on Diatessaron, Armenian version.
<i>CH</i>	<i>Hymnen Contra Haereses</i> (= Hymns against the heresies).
<i>CJul</i>	<i>Hymnen de Paradiso und Contra Julianum</i> (= hymns on the paradise and against Julian).
<i>CNis</i>	<i>Carmina Nisbene</i> (Nisibene Hymns; E. Beck's edition).
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.</i>
<i>De Ecclesia</i>	One hymn at the end of the collection <i>Hymnen de Paradiso</i> , in <i>CJul</i> .
<i>DS</i>	<i>Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique.</i>
<i>ECQ</i>	Eastern Churches Quarterly.
<i>ECR</i>	Eastern Churches Review.
<i>EM</i>	<i>Etudes Mariales.</i>
<i>Epi</i>	S. Ephraem Syri Commentarii in Epistulas D. Pauli nunc primo ex armenio sermone in Latinum a PP. Mekitaristis translati, Venetiis 1893.
<i>GET</i>	Commentaries on Genesis and Exodus.
<i>HArm</i>	Armenian hymns.
<i>HAzym</i>	<i>Paschahymnen</i> (= Paschal hymns: <i>de Azymis</i> , <i>de Crucifixione</i> , <i>de Resurrectione</i> ).
<i>HCrucif</i>	<i>Hymnen de Crucifixione</i> , in <i>HAzym</i> .
<i>HdF</i>	<i>Hymnen de Fide</i> (hymns on Faith).
<i>HEcl</i>	<i>Hymnen de Ecclesia</i> (= hymns on the Church).
<i>Hieiun</i>	<i>Hymnen de Ieiunio</i> (= hymns on fasting).
<i>HNat</i>	<i>Hymnen de Nativitate (Epiphania)</i> (= hymn on Nativity and Baptism).
<i>HParad</i>	<i>Hymns on the Paradise.</i>
<i>HResur</i>	<i>Hymnen de Resurrectione</i> (= hymns on the Resurrection), in <i>HAzym</i> .
<i>HVirg</i>	<i>Hymnen de Virginitate</i> (= hymns on Virginity).

JTS	The Journal of Theological Studies.
Mus	Le Muséon.
NTS	New Testament Studies.
OC	Orientalia Christiana.
OCA	Orientalia Christiana Analecta.
OCP	Orientalia Christiana Periodica.
OrChr	Oriens Christianus.
OS	L'Orient Syrien.
ParOr	Parole de l'Orient.
PO	Patrologia Orientalis.
PrRef	<i>Prose Refutations of Mani, Marcion and Bardaisan.</i>
RTL	Revue Théologique de Louvain.
SC	Sources Chrétiennes.
SCS	The Syrian Churches Series.
SdF	<i>Sermones de Fide</i> (= Sermons on Faith).
SDN	<i>Sermo de Domino Nostro</i> (= Sermon on Our Lord).
Serm	<i>Sermones I, II, III, IV.</i>
St Ans	Studia Anselmiana.
Syr	Syriac.
tr	Translation.
VigC	Vigiliae Christianae.
ASSEMANI,	Editio Romana (ER), ed., J. S. ASSEMANUS et PETRUS BENEDICTUS, vols. 1–6, Romae 1732–1746.
BAUMSTARK,	Syrischen Literatur = A. BAUMSTARK, Geschichte der syrischen Literatur, Bonn 1922.
BECK,	"Ascétisme et Monachisme" = E. BECK, Ascétisme et Monachisme chez saint Ephrem, OS 3 (1958) 273–298.
BECK,	"Ephrem le Syrien" = E. BECK, Ephrem le Syrien, in DS IV, Par 1960, 788–822.
BROCK,	"Early Syrian Asceticism" = S. BROCK, Early Syrian Asceticism, Numen 20 (1973) 1–19.
BROCK,	Harp = S. BROCK, <i>The Harp of the Spirit, Eighteen Poems of Saint Ephrem</i> , Studies Supplementary to Sobornst No. 4, 2nd ed., London 1983.
BROCK,	Luminous Eye = S. BROCK, <i>The Luminous Eye, The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem</i> , Muvattupuzha 1985.
BURKITT,	Early Eastern Christianity, = F. C. BURKITT, Early Eastern Christianity, London 1904.
DRIJVERS,	"Facts and Problems" = H. J. W. DRIJVERS, Facts and Problems in Early Syriac-Speaking Christianity, in <i>The Second Century. A Journal of Early Christian Studies</i> 2, Abilene, Texas 1982, 157–175. Reprinted in DRIJVERS, <i>East of Antioch</i> .
DRIJVERS,	"Hellenistic and Oriental Origins" = H. J. W. DRIJVERS, Hellenistic and Oriental Origins, in <i>The Byzantine Saint. University of Birmingham Fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies</i> , ed. S. Hackel, Studies Supplement to Sobornost 5, London, 1981, 25–33. Reprinted in DRIJVERS, <i>East of Antioch</i> .
EMEREAU,	Saint Ephrem le Syrien = C. EMEREAU, <i>Saint Ephrem le Syrien. Son oeuvre littéraire Grecque</i> , Paris 1918–19.
FRANK,	Engelgleichen Leben = P. S. FRANK, ..... : begriffsanalytische und begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum "Engelgleichliche Leben" im frühen mönchtum, Beiträge zur Geschichte des alten Mönchtums und des Benediktinerordens 26, Münster Westfalen 1964.

HALLEUX, "Ephrem le Svrien" = A. DE HALLEUX, Ephrem le Syrien, RTL 14 (1983) 328-355.

HAUSHERR, "Eastern Spirituality" = I. HAUSHERR, The Great Currents of Eastern Spirituality, ECQ 2 (1937) 111-121, 175-185.

LELOIR, *Doctrines* = L. LELOIR *Doctrines et méthodes de S. Ephrem d'après son commentaire de l'Evangile concordant (original Syriaque et version Arménienne)*, CSCO 220, Sub 18, Louvain 1961.

MARTIKAINEN, *Das Böse* = J. MARTIKAINEN, *Das Böse und der Teufel in der Theologie Ephraems des Syrers : Eine systematische-theologische Untersuchung*, Abo 1978.

MURRAY, *Symbols* = R. MURRAY, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom : a Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge 1975.

*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers XIII* = *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Second Series, Vol. 13, ed., P. SCHAFF & H. WACE, (Reprint), Michigan 1979.

ORTIZ de URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca* = I. ORTIZ DE URBINA, *Patrologia Syriaca*, 2nd ed., Roma 1965.

PAYNE-SMITH, *Thesaurus* = R. PAYNE-SMITH, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, I-II, Oxford 1879-1901, Reprint 1981.

PERNIOLA, *Sant' Efrem Siro*, = E. PERNIOLA, *Sant' Efrem Siro, Dottore della Chiesa e Cantore di Maria*, Viterbo, Italy 1989.

SPIDLICK, "Syrian Spirituality" = T. SPIDLICK, Some Aspects of Syrian Spirituality, in PAYNGOT, *Homage to mar Cariattil*, 63-71.

VOOBUS, "Aphrem and the School of Urhai" = A. VOOBUS, Aphrem and the School of Urhai, in *Ephram. Hunayn Festival: Baghdad 4-7/2/1974*, Baghdad 1974, 216-224.

VOOBUS, *Celibacy, A requirement* = A. VOOBUS *Celibacy, A Requirement for Admission to Baptism in the Early Syrian Church*, Stockholm 1951.

VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism* = A. VOOBUS, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*, Vols. 1-2, CSCO 184 & 197, Sub 14 & 17, Louvain 1958, 1960.

WRIGHT, *Syriac Literature* = W. WRIGHT, *A short History of Syriac Literature*, London 1894.

YOUSIF, "Symbolisme christologique" = P. YOUSIF, Symbolisme christologique dans la Bible et dans la Nature chez saint Ephrem de Nisibe (De Virginitate 8-11 et les textes parallèles), Par Or 8 (1977-78) 5-66.

## Book Review

**Inculcation of the Liturgy in the Indian Context.** By *Mar Abraham Mattam*, published by the Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India Publications, Kottayam 686 010, India, 1991. Pages 146. Price Rs 40.00 Library edition Rs 55.00 Outside India U. S. Dollars 5.00.

Missionary Bishop Mar Abraham Mattam with his long experience in the Indian missions and penetrating insights into the historical, theological and cultural aspects of the Indian reality has made a very valuable contribution through this book. This work is the fruit of many years of hard work. He has been collecting the necessary data from all possible sources including the various religious traditions of India.

The author deals with a very relevant subject i. e. inculcation of the gospel. Precipitous actions in the field of inculcation are bound to cause confusion, division and great harm. The bitter experience from superficial inculcation teaches us this lesson. As the author rightly points out the multi-racial, multi-cultural and multi-religious nature of the Indian society is varied and complex. Any superficial action by the Church in this complex question will do more harm than good.

Mar Abraham Mattom has divided the matter into five chapters and given two appendices which are relevant texts from the teachings of Pope John Paul II. After a brief introduction he starts with a study on the races and cultures of India and proceeds to the socio-cultural realities. In the third chapter he traces the sources of the Indian cultural heritage. It is followed by a study on the religions of India and their socio-cultural interaction. In the final chapter the author makes a synthesis and gives guidelines for inculcation and adaptation in liturgy.

This book is indeed a great contribution to missiology and a solid guide for a comprehensive vision of the Indian reality. An adequate knowledge of the religious, cultural and social background of India is inevitable for any effective step in this field. Bishop Mattam fills up a great gap and satisfies a timely and felt need of the Church in India for which he deserves thanks from all concerned. Some of the bibliographical data are not complete which I hope will be perfected in the next edition.

Paurastya Vidyāpītham  
Vadavathoor, Kottayam 686 010

Xavier Koodapuzha

# News

## **Cardinal Silvestrini, Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches**

His Holiness Pope John Paul II has appointed His Em. Card. Achille Silvestrini as the Prefect of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches. He succeeds H. E. Simon Card. Lourdusamy who took charge as Prefect in October, 1985. He was unable to carry out his duties as Prefect due to ill health. The new Prefect had served in the Secretariate of State and later as the head of the Supreme Tribunal of Signatura Apostolica. Born in Faenza near Bologna in Italy, the new Prefect comes with rich experience. We wish him every success and a speedy recovery to the outgoing Prefect Card. Lourdusamy.

## **Mar Thoma Vidya Nikethan**

A centre for the study of Theology exclusively for laity has come into existence at Changannacherry in Kerala, India. The new centre is called *Mar Thoma Vidya Nikethan*. Its objective is to impart theological formation to lay people according to the heritage of Syro-Malabar Church. After 4 years of study the candidates will be awarded M. A. in Religious Sciences. Sponsored by *Paurastya Vidya Pitham*, Vadavathoor, India, this new centre of study has been officially recognised on April 20, 1991 by the Congregation for Catholic Education, Rome. It is the first of its kind in India and it belongs to the Archdiocese of Changannacherry. Its formal inauguration was on July 3, 1991, the day of the *Dukarana* of Mar Thoma the Apostle, by His Grace Mar Joseph Powathil, abp. of Changannacherry.

## **Ecclesial Catechesis**

The decision of the S. M. B. C. taken in its meeting held on 7-8 January, 1991 is of historical importance. Until recently the catholic churches of the latin and Syro-Malabar traditions in India were following the same text books for the catechesis of the faithful. Since catechesis is intimately related to the faith and life of every individual church, the need was felt to formulate text books taking into account the ecclesial heritage of each church. Catechesis is more than imparting certain truths. It should aim at familiarizing the faithful with their proper faith traditions and enable them to give expression to it in their life. It is the liturgy that expresses the faith and life of the church in a pre-eminent way. Hence, the S. M. B. C. has given direction to formulate new text books.

## **Ecumenical Dialogue in Venice**

Venice in Italy has witnessed to the second gathering of the 4th stage of the dialogue between the catholic church and the Pentecostal churches. It was organized jointly by the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity and the representatives of the various Pentecostal churches. The theme of discussion was "The Biblical and systematic bases of evangelisation". The meeting emphasized the need to search for the important aspects of communion, point out areas which require more discussions, etc. The meeting which was very cordial and open ended with a common prayer.

## Oriental Ecclesiastical Recent Books

The next number of **Christian Orient** will be a special issue on the new code of Canon Law (Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium) which will be published in March 1992. Hence the next issue (No. 4 on Ecumenism) is dropped.

## OIRSI Publications, Recent Books

137. J. Kattackal, Comparative Religion, 1990, p. 318, Rs. 100/-
138. G. Chediath - Fr. G. Appassery, Indiayude Metropolita Mar Abraham, 1990, p. 4 + 144, Rs. 14/- (m)
139. Joseph Vazhuthanapally, Archaeology of Mar Sliba, 1990, pp, XVI + 144, Rs. 60/-
140. M. Vellanikal (ed), Bible Vinjanakosam: Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 1989, pp. 1000, Rs. 200 (m).
141. Xavier Puthenkalam, Hindu Christian Bhakti, 1990, pp. 156, Rs. 40/-
142. G. Chegiath (ed). Socrates, Sabhacharitram 1990, pp. 562, Rs. -50/- (m).
143. Martin Gielen, the St. Thomas Apostle of India, 1990, pp. 310 Rs. 40/-
144. G. Chediath, G. Appassery, Bar Abraya, Sabhacharitram, 1990 pp. 276. Rs 24/- (m)
145. Lonappan Arangassery Ecclesial Dimensions of East Syrian Liturgy 1990, pp. 160, Rs. 40/-
146. G. Chediath, Prarthana Suriani Sabhayil, 1991, pp. 280, Rs. 22/- (m).
147. Andrew Athappilly, The Local Churches in the Colonial Set -Up 1991. Rs. 12/-
148. Mar Abraham Mattom, Inculturation of the Liturgy in the Indian Context, 1991, pp. 156, Rs. 40/-

(m = malayalam)

**OIRSI Publications, Vadavathoor, P. B. No. 1  
Kottayam - 686 010, Kerala, India**